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Mrs. Harry St. John

A Realistic Novel
of
Boston Fashionable Life
By
Robert Appleton.

CHICAGO:
MORRILL, HIGGINS & CO., PUBLISHERS.

Idylwild Series. Vol. I, No. 20, Sept. 13, 1892. Issued Weekly. Annual Subscription, $26.00.
Entered in the Postoffice at Chicago as second-class matter.

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"I AM TIRED NOW AND A LITTLE COLD."

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Mrs. Harry St. John

A Realistic Novel of

Boston Fashionable Life.

BY

ROBERT APPLETON.

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PROLOGUE.

BEFORE THE BALL.

"Amie! Ami-e-e!"

A pretty blonde, slim and neatly dressed, appeared at the door in answer to Mrs. St. John's call, and coming nearer her, she asked in a piquant, foreign accent:

"You called me, madame?"

"Oh, Amie, you are a perfect jewel! My hair is lovely! how could you have patience to make so many curls? I am sure there are over a thousand at the back of my head. Are they becoming to my dress?" And Mrs. St. John retreated a few steps before her cheval mirror and craned her neck to see the effect of her whole figure, from her head to her train.

"I think you are charming, madame!" Amie said, gently stepping forward and adjusting the train of her dress to its best advantage.

As Mrs. St. John glanced at herself for a moment or two in the mirror, a sensation of triumphant satisfaction stole over her when she realized that her maid was far from flattering in describing her as charming. Her figure was superbly symmetrical,

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graceful in outline, rather tall, while her carriage was at once dignified and vivacious. Her neck and head, the back of her neck which her decolette dress threw into relief had a suggestive charm that was augmented by the voluptuous expression of her bare shoulders. Her face was slightly flushed just then and it gave additional beauty to her well-cut features. It seemed to give a luster to her large, liquid grey eyes which looked out from under long and thick eyelashes. The eyelashes were dark, almost black, and were in strange contrast to the profusion of light hair, very light hair, with an admixture of red, which curled and twined round her forehead in countless, fantastic wavelets. Two or three small jewels glittered in their midst, and looked like drops of dew resplendent in the morning sunshine. Oh, yes; she looked very beautiful! she thought as she turned round and examined the front part of her figure.

"Hand me my gloves, Amie; I think this will do. Do I look all right? I'll have to put on my gloves now, it's nearly half past eleven. You needn't come down with me. Patrick is up, isn't he?"

"Yes, madame."

"All right; you needn't come down; he'll open the door; and Amie?"

"Yes, madame?"

"Oh, you needn't stay up; I won't be home before five or six in the morning, probably, and I'll

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undress myself. Tell Patrick to lock up and go to bed, too. I've got a key with me."

Mrs. St. John went down stairs and walked into her boudoir. It was a lovely little room, full of quaint bric-a-brac, all artistically grouped, while the cheerful wood fire, which was crackling in the grate, threw a pink glamour over everything, making it very inviting and cozy. She sat down on a settee near the window, letting her cloak, which she was carrying on her arm, slide down to the ground, and, while she was putting on her gloves, she kept now looking out the window, now gazing at the fire.

Outside was cold. She knew it from the way in which the lights across the river kept scintillating, and as she kept looking at them she began to feel chilly herself. She got up and sat down on the corner of a couch near the fire, still buttoning her gloves, while she kept glancing up at the little clock which was nitched in near the mantel-piece, and thinking it was time for him to come. She was becoming somewhat lacadaisical, drooping in her attitude—he was so late! when suddenly she heard the whirr of wheels, and a minute later the bell rang, the door opened, and she heard footsteps running up stairs.

Frank Burwell paused at the threshold of her boudoir. He was tall and dark, and his evening dress threw conspicuously in relief his well developed chest and figure. He stood looking at her,

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holding a large bouquet of flowers in one hand and his hat in the other. She had risen meantime, and seemingly unconscious of his presence was craning her neck toward the small mirror in front of her.

"Maud, you are ravishing!" he said, still standing and gazing at her.

She did not reply; she went on craning her neck this way and that and adjusting her hair; she was holding a pin in her mouth. "I wish you would tuck in this tiny fringe at my back; now do be careful, Frank!" she said appealingly.

Frank put down his flowers and his hat, and went over to do what he was asked. It was so close to the bare part of her neck that after he had accomplished his task, it was almost irresistible for him to kiss her, and then he stood up, looking radiant over her. She was ready by that time; she was facing him, a consciousness of her beauty irradiating her eyes and lips, and half smiling and half pouting, she made a little grimace at him as she asked:

"Do you think I'll do?"

"No, you won't!" he said with a sigh, "but they all will!"

"Don't be silly! It's really time for us to go! Did you bring me flowers? Oh, they are too gorgeous!" she exclaimed, as she glanced at the lovely combination of roses.

"I intended them for you, my love, and I thought them very beautiful when they were put up; but

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now, when they are near you, they look so insignificant!"

Her eyes glistened, and she stretched out her hand to receive the flowers. He raised them higher over her head, and, as she came nearer, he put his arm gently round her waist, and kissed her lips.

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CHAPTER I.

MAUD IN THE BALL ROOM.

"What a bow! Is he an acrobat by profession? Gad! but the psalmist was right when he said that we were wonderfully made! *He* is, if he can stand up straight after that performance; who is he?"

"Hush! tell it not in gath! Who he is in particular I can not tell you. His name is Osborne, and, I believe that is his profession, too. He is one of our Boston inevitables; an old bachelor by occupation; could be met with in all the drawingrooms and clubs to boot. He says he has some singular views about women, though what those views are no man knows, nor he either, I believe. At times, he gives you to understand that he is a gay Lothario, though a sadder dog never bayed the moon, and his red nose is not at all a sign—Oh! look, look! I mean to the right, you blockhead! Isn't she stunning?"

"Her dress, is at all events! And you needn't have nudged me so violently either. I was more attractively engaged looking at that tall girl with the wavy hair—a perfect Juno, by Jove! Pity she has a voice.

"Pray, don't pity as yet! She is a Miss Lawrence. Damn fine girl; fine arms, and steps out as if she

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could stand a great deal of wisdom. She has large eyes, but that's not her virtue; her lips are though, and they look as if you could feast on them. The lady with her? Oh! she is a widow indeed; quite a figure in Boston society! She is divorced and is half in mourning for another man. Come and be presented! How d'ye do?"

The two young men who had been standing in a corner of the ball-room, moved out to the front, and as the ladies passed them, the last one presented his friend.

"How do you do, Miss Lawrence? I haven't seen you for an age, Mrs. Gray; allow me to introduce to you, Mr. Wellesley Trench, an English friend of mine, who has ventured into the wilds of Boston."

Trench bowed to the ladies, and the group stood talking for a few minutes. Suddenly the young lady exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Prescott! you know everybody, quick! who is this just entering? I mean the man with Mrs. Sampson?"

"Oh, he is one of this season's noblemen, a Count de Holtz he calls himself."

"Who is he? Do you know anything about him?"

"He hails somewhere from Austria, I believe. He writes books at his leisure, he says, though I don't believe he has ever had time enough to get the leisure. I am surprised you haven't met him yet, Miss Lawrence. He adores the fair sex and has

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made us all madly jealous. Mrs. Sampson has turned her back on all her friends, and is said to be taking lessons on the guitar, on which the Count is very proficient. He speaks French with an English accent and English with a French pronunciation. Besides duets, they say he is passionately fond of sauer-kraut and Plato!"

"Oh, stop such perfect nonsense! Isn't Mr. Prescott perfectly dreadful? He is always laughing at somebody, and can't even leave the poor Count alone. The poor fellow, he has adorable hair."

"There! didn't I tell you?" asked Prescott turning to Trench. "They are all raving about him because he has hair, or for some reason or other. I met Mrs. St. John the other day, and the first question she asked me was, "Oh! have you met the Count? I have just been talking to him; he is perfectly sweet." I told her I regretted they did't put a high duty on foreign sweets, but she didn't appreciate my joke."

"But Mrs. St. John adores foreigners; it's her fad!" intervened Mrs. Gray.

"Yes, it's their fad always;" replied Prescott. "I've got a mind to become a foreigner myself. I may succeed in getting a little adoration, then. Oh, here she comes with Frank Burwell. That's Mrs. St. John, Trench; isn't she perfectly magnificent tonight? See! doesn't she look like the Seraph that burns—what's that line of Pope's?"

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"By Jove, but she is handsome!" ejaculated Trench as he riveted his eyes upon her.

Mrs. St. John entered the spacious ball-room, leaning on Burwell's arm, smiling radiantly and bowing right and left to the numerous acquaintances who eagerly greeted her. She went up to the matrons who stood near the wall looking like queer saints in the act of receiving homage. She bowed gracefully, and then was led off by Frank into the midst of the hall. At the same moment almost, the band in the gallery struck up a vivacious strain, and somebody led off the first cotillion.

It seemed as if Mrs. St. John brought new life into the place. Everything began to move and stir, everybody seemed to liven up and talk, while she moved about—she had released Frank's arm—talking gaily, smiling and chatting with everybody she met there.

"Oh! Mr. Prescott, how do you do?" she said as she stopped to talk to him. "I thought you swore you wouldn't come to the ball; I am coming to believe that men really enjoy the act of breaking vows and resolutions. Delighted to meet you, Mr. Trench; I heard so much of you from your friends, the Stewards!"

"I trust their recommendation was more than I deserve!" replied Trench seriously.

"That I will tell you when I know you better, for which I trust you will give me the opportunity."

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"It will be my greatest pleasure to avail myself of your kindness," replied Trench, bowing.

"Now, Mrs. St. John! I told you I had an excuse for breaking my vow;" interrupted Prescott. "I thought it would be doing Boston an injustice, and Trench a wrong, not to bring him here on such an auspicious occasion."

"Well, if you had such pleasant excuses for all the wrong you do, you might be more frequently forgiven."

"Have I done a wrong by bringing Mr. Trench here? I assure you, Mrs. St. John, he is comparatively harmless."

"I will take your word for it, Mr. Prescott," Mrs. St. John began to say, when Burwell came up holding two tickets in his hand and said, "I've managed to get two consecutive seats at last! How are you, Prescott?"

At that moment they all began to move downstairs.

"To prove how much I rely on you, Mr. Prescott, I am going to ask Mr. Trench to take me down to supper," said Mrs. St. John with a smile at Frank Burwell, while she put her hand through Trench's arm and joined the rows of people who were going out of the ball-room.

Prescott offered his arm to Mrs. Gray whom he espied among the crowd, while Frank Burwell remained standing like one dazed. A sickly pre-

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sentiment chased away all liveliness from his heart. He stood there looking at Maud and Trench disappearing amongst the crowd. She looked magnificently beautiful, while Trench bore himself erect, straight, almost imposing in his carriage. The back of his head was handsomely shaped, and, in the slight movements which he gave, there seemed to be a consciousness of pride, of an assurance—Confound it! He was only imagining it all! It was perfectly natural for her to show favors to a stranger, and it was a natural compliment to Prescott whose friend he was and whom he was visiting.

Frank tried to dismiss his misgivings. He walked through the hall, which was almost deserted by this time, with a firm and resolute step, as if to say, that he was not going to give in to blue humors. The band was still playing the finale of some timely march which helped to dissipate his sudden gloom. By the time he was running down the stairs, he felt more cheerful, and he smiled brightly as he entered the large and crowded dining-room and caught a glance of Maud who beckoned him near her.

"I felt like Marius on the ruins of Cathage," he said, sitting down by her side, "when I found myself upstairs and alone with those magnificent floral designs staring down on me. You will give me your first dance, won't you?"

"Certainly," she replied.

"May I beg for the second?" asked Trench.

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"I am sorry, I am already engaged for that."

"Then may I hope for the fourth?"

Mrs. St. John gave a quick, sharp glance at him, a smile illuminating her beautiful, large eyes.

"Do you indulge in the German? I thought Englishmen looked down on it! You will be my fourth, then, thanks!"

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CHAPTER II.

TRENCH AND PRESCOTT.

"So she has promised you a dance, has she?' Prescott was saying to Trench when they returned to the dancing-hall and were again standing together in a corner. "I thought you weren't going to dance to-night at all."

"Nor did I, but circumstances alter cases, my dear fellow!"

"I see that they do, and you must avail yourself of the opportunity as long as the goddess is so propitious. Now you are in luck, Trench! your success in Boston society is assured, and Mrs. St. John's favor to you will make a hundred fellows die of jealousy by to-morrow and entertain the most ominous opinions of strangers and foreigners. You have not been introduced to Mrs. Sampson yet, have you? Well, that's an indispensable preliminary in order to make your position here indestructible."

"Who is Mrs. Sampson? I wish you would tell me all about the people you present me to—and Mrs. St. John? Tell me all about her."

"What! three weeks in Boston and not know who Mrs. Sampson is, who she was, and what she will be?" ejaculated Prescott. "My dear fellow, you astound me! It's like being in London and not know who and what Queen Victoria is."

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"Indeed?"

"It is! And you needn't look sarcastic, it doesn't become your complexion, Trench—not a bit! We Americans, we Bostonians, have also our queens, let me tell you! They are not imposed on us, they are not hereditary sovereigns, but they are tacitly elected by us—society."

"I say, confound you and your queens! I don't want an exposition of the American constitution; I am asking you something about the people, and if you keep indulging in similar dissertations I am likely to remain ignorant of who, what, and where your queens are here. Who is Mrs. St. John?"

"Who is Mrs. St. John, eh? Well, she is Mrs. St. John. How beautiful she is, your own susceptibilities will tell you! How charming she is, you will be able to judge better when you know her better."

"Oh, your sagacity passes all understanding! I am asking you who she is, and you go on telling me what she is!"

"Well, can't you have some patience? I will tell you all about her. Mrs. St. John is the wife of Harry St. John, an estimable, honorable citizen, who knows the value of the stocks, and whose viens are stocked with the bluest blood of the Hub."

"What! alive?"

"Eh?—yes, alive!" said Prescott with a quick, scrutinizing glance at his friend whose eyes all the time were following the movements of the lady they

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were talking about. "Oh, yes! very much alive, indeed!" continued Prescott; "you needn't be afraid, though, he is very harmless, as we all are, the most of us in this country! He is president of a large railroad which absorbs most of his serious attention, and his leisure he devotes most in doing what his wife wants him to do."

"A blessing of a husband! Who was she originally?"

"I see you are adapting yourself to American customs very rapidly. Look! doesn't she dance beautifully? and Frank Burwell looks quite handsome, doesn't he? Oh, she was originally Maud Endicott, and has only been married six years."

"Who is that Frank Burwell?" asked Trench, his face cast in the severest mould possible and unconscious of the quizzical look with which his friend regarded him.

"Oh, Frank Burwell is a very nice fellow; they are great friends."

"So it would seem!"

"Well, this is one of those instances in which looks don't belie the facts; exception proving the rule, you know! He is a sort of a nephew, a kind of a cousin, or something of that sort of her husband's."

"Lucky dog!"

"Miserable cat! I wouldn't mind being something of the sort myself, Trench, to speak candidly."

"What! sacrifice your principle of misogony?"

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"I wouldn't mind dying a martyr in the cause. They say that it is only the devil who is never tempted, though I sincerely believe Mrs. St. John could tempt the devil, too! By the way, I didn't tell you who Mrs. Sampson is, did I? Here she comes whirling around."

"She doesn't look particularly striking;" observed Trench as the lady passed them. "And why, oh, why, does she dance? She might, in repose, be forgiven for living!"

Prescott smiled." I see," he said, "the surroundings are having an exhilarating effect on you. It is lucky nobody overheard you," he added, with a mock expression of fear on his features, as he looked round and noticed everybody else to be otherwise occupied than in overhearing their conversation.

"I have marvelous luck that way," observed Trench, satirically.

"Yes, it's lucky, or your chances would have been nipped in the bud. Mrs. Sampson, you must know, is the power of Boston society. She is not particularly pretty, as you have noticed, mayhap?"

"Mayhap, I have! She's got a figure which would be quite fetching without her head."

"Humph! I see you have a practiced eye and an apt style. Well, as I was saying, she is not particularly pretty, but she gives handsome entertainments. Her wits are not particularly brilliant, but she has lots of gold and shining jewels. She is fond of

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lions, not the wild ones of the desert, but the objectionable ones of the drawing-room, and she is kind of a benevolent sponsor to them. Nobody believes that she is particularly virtuous, but she gives excellent dinners to which everybody is dying to be invited. She is not particularly refined or marvelously accomplished; but she can pay for all the luxuries of all tastes, and by providing them for others, others, in return, make believe that she understands what she is doing—that's Mrs. Sampson; the rest you will learn of her when you know her."

"Is she religious? Tell me, is she religious? You have omitted a very important point."

"Her religion is her forte, and she is sure to die praying."

"Aren't you going to dance to-night?"

"My dancing days are over."

"Oh, don't be stupid! I am speaking about night and not day."

"That's another question. I may be led into the temptation before the thing is over, 'tis nearly your turn; have you got a favor?"

"No, by Jove! let's go and get one!"

The two friends moved toward the place where the favors were artistically piled up. Trench was given a pretty branch of forget-me-nots, which he extricated and turned round to go off when suddenly he was accosted by Frank Burwell.

"This your first dance?" he asked.

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"Yes, my first dance of the evening."

"Why, Prescott, you have been remiss in introducing your friend more." Burwell said, turning to Prescott who was curiously and daintily handling a favor which he had obtained.

"Oh, I know his tastes!" the latter said carelessly without even looking at Burwell." There, now! I've got to go and sacrifice myself to Miss Perry—no, confound it! I forgot that I begged for a dance of Miss Lawrence. Here's Mrs. Sampson, and the count in her arms; he looks as if he were clinging to her for his bare existence."

"Gad! how does he manage to keep his hair on his head?" Burwell remarked.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but I've got to attend to my engagements," Trench broke in, as he noticed Mrs. St. John sit down and look round expectantly, in spite of the fact that a robust-looking man was trying his utmost to engage her attention.

"The saints be with you!" said Prescott as Trench moved off, favor in hand, and was making his way toward Mrs. St. John.

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CHAPTER III.

THE INTERLUDE.

Mrs. St. John almost rose to meet him and, smiling appreciatively on his favor, she started out and joined the cotillion. Trench danced gracefully and easily, and if his manner was somewhat serious, Mrs. St. John felt herself in delightful harmony with his steps and his movements. Both of them, as they mingled among the dancers, were conspicuous for the symmetry, almost placidity, of their dancing, since neither of them appeared in the slightest degree conscious or constrained. Mrs. St. John was too great a favorite not to be noticed and commented upon at any time, and on this occasion as she moved, almost in gliding circles, past the groups of people seated or standing in the hall, she could distinctly overhear loud exclamations of surprise or admiring ejaculations at her shapeliness, nimbleness and Trench's bearing and appearance. From one corner, as they swept past, she heard clearly Prescott's voice exclaim, "By Jove! what a splendid pair they make, Frank!" She did not look back, but she felt that Frank Burwell's glance was riveted upon her, and she almost felt the dark glitter which was wont to pass over his eyes when, what he called, a presentiment had suddenly taken possession of his soul.

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"Thank you!" she whispered, as they had danced around the hall now for the second time and were approaching her seat.

Trench stopped, released her, offered her his arm, and led her to her chair.

"You dance perfectly; I have never had a better partner," she said, taking up her fan.

"It is very good of you to say so, Mrs. St. John; may I sit down?"

"Won't you please? Do you know that you are the first who ever made me feel my dancing awkward?"

"I didn't believe I could be so unfortunate; it shows how terribly awkward my dancing must be," replied Trench, sitting down and looking at her flushed face and brightened eyes, and thinking to himself, "Two little, lovely, liquid stars." "May I fan you, Mrs. St. John?" he asked.

"Thank you; you knew what I meant very well, didn't you? You dance so well, so smoothly. Do you know," she suddenly broke off, "that you are the first Englishman I ever danced with?"

"I feel myself doubly honored and doubly fortunate," replied Trench, gently fanning her.

Mrs. St. John's face was expressive of pleasurable sensations, and the scented breath which came from the fan's motion suffused an agreeable feeling over her whole body, and was rapidly soothing the buoyancy which her dancing had excited in her.

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All of a sudden she turned toward Trench; she almost sat sideways and seemed to have come ever so much nearer him; her face was animated with a strange expression, as if the impulse of a strong intuition made her divine something, and as if her eyes were now scrutinizing the veracity of that divination.

"Tell me, Mr. Trench"—she started out, but as rapidly faltered. The tentative expression of her face had relaxed when she continued: "Tell me, Mr. Trench, are you very fond of dancing?"

"It depends on circumstances," replied Trench, whose eyes were more in earnest than his reply warranted. "I am not a dancing man, Mrs. St. John, but I have sometimes been led to feel that I should like to go on dancing forever."

"Really? I don't think I ever felt that way in my life. Do you feel it very frequently?"

Trench gave her a quick, searching glance. Her eyes were smiling, but she drooped them when she met his look. "Not very frequently, but often enough to remember the sensation," he replied; "but your superb dancing, Mrs. St. John, is strong evidence of your great fondness of it."

"Oh, yes, I like it ever so much, and here comes my cavalier for my next dance. What a sweet favor, Frank!" she said, as she stood up and took Burwell's arm, and smilingly bowing to Trench.

Trench stood for a minute or two watching them mingle with the crowd of dancers. A vague, strange

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feeling agitated all his emotions. A feeling strong enough to amount to an influence had rapidly taken possession of him, and as he stood watching Mrs. St. John and Burwell, watching their bright and happy faces, the sense of the whole ball-room rapidly stole on his mind and he seemed almost, for the first time, to appreciate the liveliness, brilliancy and pleasurable charm that permeated the whole place, the whole scene, and the beauty of most of the faces present.

For a moment or two he almost abandoned himself to the influence of a reverie;—everything before and around him had rapidly mingled in some sweet and beautiful confusion, everything had blended into an agreeable, crowded picture, the figures of which were the charming creations of an exuberant fancy, who moved and acted under some mysterious influences and to the magic rhythm of musical sounds. And through everything and above all he only perceived one distinct image, one face, whose features were iradiating happiness, and whose eyes were smiling on him with that indescribable brightness which seemed to mirror forth the intense pleasurable sensations of the inmost soul.

But all this was only the effect of a moment or two. It was not in his nature to abandon himself suddenly to visionary influences. As soon as it passed, he was almost inclined to attribute it to a vague dizziness consequent upon his dancing. With

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the slightest effort he shook off the strange influences that had swept over his mind. He saw Mrs. St. John dance past him and Burwell glance at him, and he moved off in search of his friend Prescott, whom he discovered talking impressively to a very pretty blonde on the other side of the hall, and who hastened to present him with the dubious recommendation, that Hercules danced well and that Apollo was very strong, but that a protective tariff would make Americans handsome enough.

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CHAPTER IV.

AFTER THE BALL.

It was early in the morning when the ball began to break up. Mrs. St. John had danced incessantly all the night, and, in spite of the strain and fatigue which she had undergone, looked as bright and fresh and radiant as if she had just arrived there, instead of having stayed there from midnight till nearly six in the morning. Prescott and Trench stayed on, too; the latter danced considerably, and had Mrs. St. John several times for his partner; and as she was going and Trench had come up to take leave of her, she reiterated her invitation:

"You must come and see me very soon!" she said; "I'll be delighted to see you any afternoon, and Mr. Prescott, I don't think I'll readily forgive you for not having brought Mr. Trench before. Good-bye! Oh, isn't it perfectly lovely?" she exclaimed, as, stepping into the carriage, she glanced on the vista over the common.

"I don't feel a bit tired!" said Burwell, as he seated himself beside her in the carriage and they were driving off, "and you look as if you were just driving to the ball instead of coming from it—oh,

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I hate it to be over so soon!" he exclaimed suddenly, "I don't like going home a bit, do you?"

"I have a fascinating idea; let's not go straight home," she replied.

"Oh, Maud, you are lovely; your eyes were lustrously lovely when you said it! What shall we do?" and in his eagerness he leaned nearer her and stole his arm round her waist.

"Mind! mind! people can see in here!" she said, responding to his embrace with a pressure of his hand. "Let us go out driving for an hour or so before we return home. What do you think?"

"I think—I think—let me see, what do I think? Oh! I won't think at all; I'll resign myself to it. Shall I tell the Jehu to drive on, straight ahead?"

"Why, you are perfectly wild!" she exclaimed, laughingly; "who is Jehu?"

"You sweet heathen—you don't know who Jehu is! Shall I tell him to drive on and on, and to follow his own nose till we find no more turns?"

"Oh, don't be silly, Frank! Tell him to drive for an hour or so, and then return home. We must not be too late and be seen driving so early; it would be disgraceful!"

"Yessem!" and Burwell hastened to give orders to drive straight out of town, across the new bridge and return by Cambridge street. "Follow your nose, John," she heard him exclaim, as he returned to his seat.

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"Oh, Maud!" he said, impressively, "you know John has got last night's sunset frozen in his nose; I am afraid his way of driving will not be as straight as we could wish. But you'll freeze; let me wrap this round you, do!"

"I am not a bit cold, and I wish we could have the window open; I just long for fresh air, for a storm of it—and I could swallow it. Look! isn't it beautiful?" she exclaimed, as they were driving down Beacon street, and were passing the Public Gardens.

In truth, the view which burst on Burwell's sight when he looked out was very arresting. The sun was disentangling itself from a mass of fleecy clouds which, rolling off in fantastic shapes and forms, were momentarily transfused with different colors and various shades, and were rapidly forming a luminous archway of liquid gold for the sun to pass through. The trees, still bare, stood erect and buoyant, and the buds gave a piquant appearance to them, as if they were conscious of their coming life and beauty.

The warmth of the sun's rays was rapidly transforming the cold dew of the night into the appearance of liquid softness, more natural to the dawn of a summer's day than to the advent of an early spring morning.

But Burwell did not look very long on the view outside. He turned round, glanced at Maud's face,

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and, without giving her a moment's warning, had impressed his lips on hers in a long and passionate kiss.

"Goodness, Frank! you are not a bit careful, and it is not very kind of you; it is very easy to see through the carriage-door." And she fell back, reclining and half pouting.

"I am awful sorry, darling;" he pleaded, "but I couldn't help it — 'pon my word I couldn't; and 't isn't a bit nice in you to be cross. There now, won't you forgive me? Please, darling, do!"

And he took her limp hand in his, which gradually responded to his pressure and, by and by, her face lit up with a smile while she kept biting her lip, a habit she had when she was displeased or thoughtful, and which gave her face a very girlishly youthful expression.

"There now!" he exclaimed, "now that your smile is chasing the clouds from your face, you look the personification of a spring morning. Oh, Maud! you know what I would long to happen now?"

"What?"

"That we were going to drive on and on, and never return."

Her hand which still lay in his gave a gentle pressure, but she did not say a word. She reclined in the carriage, her head resting on her hand, her eyes gazing abstractedly through the window. As rapidly as her smile appeared it had already vanished and her features were now in a seriously contemp-

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lative cast. Burwell also fell back and for several minutes they drove on in silence.

It was past seven when they returned home. Before stopping Mrs. St. John had suggested to Burwell to come into breakfast. It would look better if he did, she said, and he was but too eager to comply.

When they entered, the household was hardly astir yet. The footman who appeared in the hallway when they were opening the door and who stood obsequiously to receive his mistress was ordered to kindle the fire in her boudoir, and to tell the servants to hasten breakfast. The footman hastened to obey orders. By the time they walked upstairs and into her boudoir, the wood was already crackling, and rapidly kindling in the grate and the fire was already throwing out warmth into the room.

Mrs. St. John threw off her cloak, dropped down some favors she was carrying, while Burwell lay down the large bouquet of roses which he had brought up with him and which still emitted a sweet, delicate scent.

"I am tired now and a little cold;" she said, sinking down in an armchair which she had drawn up to the fire, and while gazing at the struggling and dancing flames, she was pulling off her gloves. "I wish I had on another dress!"

"Why don't you change it?"

"I think I will, only I am so tired and lazy—I hate to stir!"

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"Oh, please go upstairs and change your dress! Otherwise I won't feel at all comfortable."

"Demnition grind!" she said rising from her chair with an effort. "I'll be right down; it won't take me a minute," she added as she started to leave the room.

"Maud," said Burwell, gently arresting her movement. He was sitting on a couch near the fire-place and he had taken hold of her hand and drew her nearer to him. "Kiss me!" and as she bent over him to kiss his lips, he drew her down on his lap and kissed her lips repeatedly, her chin, her neck and her eyes before he released her.

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CHAPTER V.

BURWELL IN THE BOUDOIR.

Mrs. St. John did not linger upstairs too long. She came down in a silk morning wrapper, breathing relieved and feeling ever so much more comfortable.

She went over and sat across Burwell's lap, her arm round his neck, her fingers playing around his ear, while his arm had wound tightly round her waist and was pressing her closer to his breast.

"Nina is up and nearly dressed, and nurse is going to bring down baby in a moment. I told her to, so you had better be careful!" she said in a whisper.

"When do you expect Harry?"

"He wired yesterday that he will be back to lunch; he'll probably start by the ten train from New York. Let me up, quick! I hear nurse."

She had scarcely time to get back to her chair when the patter of tiny footsteps was heard in the adjoining room; and a ringing little voice cried out:

"Oh, mamma! mamma! you were happy at the ball?"

"Yes, dear; come over, Nina, and kiss me," Mrs. St. John said as her little girl ran into the room and almost into her arms. She was a tiny little child with a delicately pretty face, all fresh, all rosy, and large, liquid blue eyes that radiated brightness and

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a wealth of golden, silken masses of hair to throw her features into charming relief. She rushed up to her mother and throwing her tiny arms round her neck kissed her fervently, exclaiming, "But mamma! you are so early!"

"Look, Nina! Didn't you see cousin Frank was here?"

Nina turned round quickly, or rather seemed to jerk round her pretty head in the direction of Burwell, and the next moment she was already in his arms and on his knees where he had lifted her to kiss her.

"Oh, you naughty little truant, you! So you wouldn't come up to my rooms as you promised; and I waited for you all the afternoon; you mustn't begin so early!" and Burwell passed his fingers over Nina's tiny nose.

"But mamma didn't let me," pleaded the child, her eyes growing larger.

"No; it was my fault, and you must forgive her this time," Mrs. St. John said; "I wouldn't let her go out yesterday; it was too cloudy and Harry hasn't been feeling well for the last few days."

"Cutting teeth?" asked Burwell, with the air of a man who knew all about it. Mrs. St. John laughed.

"Yes; Harry is getting teeth; two, twee teeth; such tiny little ones. I see them wight here!" cried Nina excitedly and pointing to a couple of front pearls of her own. "I hear nurse and Harry!" she

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exclaimed, sliding down Burwell's knees and running out of the room to meet nurse and baby.

A minute later baby was brought in. Mrs. St. John took him in her arms for a second or two, asked him all sorts of questions to which the baby replied with inexplicably joyous cooing, and putting a few interrogations to the nurse, she sent both of her children out of the boudoir.

"Oh, mamma!" cried Nina before leaving, "is papa coming home?"

"Yes, Nina, to-day. Now, be a good child and be good to Harry. Papa sent you his love—and don't play too loud upstairs. I am going to sleep all day; good-bye! good-bye, baby!"

"That baby is growing wonderfully!" remarked Burwell as soon as the children and nurse left the room.

"Yes, and I am dreading his growth, too," replied Mrs. St. John, her features suddenly contracting with a solemn expression.

"Why?"

She did not answer.

Burwell hung his head and there was a long silence. Both seemed absorbed in thought when Burwell interrupted by asking:

"How old is Nina?"

"Four years and three months. Goodness! I am nearly six years married already; I am getting to be a regular old woman!"

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At this moment the servant came up to announce breakfast, and they both went down to the dining-room.

"And you say Prescott said it? When and how?" Mrs. St. John was asking, after breakfast, as they were returning to the boudoir.

"When you were dancing with him. You don't know how mad I felt! I didn't feel particularly comfortable when you let him take you down to the refreshment room, I assure you!"

"But, you big baby, you! Mr. Trench is the Prescotts' guest, and ever so many people have talked to me about him. Mrs. Sampson is raving to every one, and it was natural courtesy to show some interest in him."

"Yes; but it made me feel confoundedly unpleasant, all the same! I can't help it, Maud. You know I am not jealous, but you looked so handsome and so bewitching, the man would be a deuced chump if he didn't fall in love with you!"

Mrs. St. John laughed.

"I don't mind that." She said. "He dances splendidly, and he looks so impenetrably distinguished. How long is he going to stay here?"

"Oh, two or three months, confound him!"

"So you've made inquiries and know all about him?"

"I only asked Prescott in the natural course of conversation. I couldn't help being interested, you

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know, seeing you took such an interest in him all of a sudden!" said Burwell, looking steadily into the fire.

"Oh, I don't mind, in the least! I am not jealous a bit, provided you don't make such a fool of yourself as you did over the poor Count! The poor fellow is afraid to come near me now, and he had to plead the toothache last night, in order not to dance with me!"

Burwell's clouded face was brightening with a smile.

"What else did you find out about that Mr. Trench?" she continued. "Tell me all about him; I am just consumed with curiosity!" And Mrs. St. John settled herself comfortably in her rocking-chair, as if to listen to a long story.

"That's what he was, when he met you last night!" replied Burwell.

"What! Consuming? Poor man! I think I will have to retire from the world, for the good of mankind!"

"Well, he did!" Burwell said, in a tone of voice as if he meant to imply that he didn't care. "He asked all sorts of questions about you, followed you about the room everywhere with his eyes, and seemed to jump out of his skin when the time came for your dance with him!"

"How tragic! Continue, if you please."

"You may laugh as much as you please, but if you knew how I suffered all the time—"

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"I would never smile again. I noticed you suffered deeply. What did Miss Prescott think of Mr. Trench?"

"Oh, they had met before, in England, or something of that sort! I had to do something; you didn't want me to stand staring at you all the time; you told me, yourself, to dance with others a great deal; otherwise people would make talk. People be damned!"

"Yes, some!"

Burwell glanced at her furtively, and a smile flitted over his face.

"So, Mr. Trench is going to stay here a few months; it's perfectly charming of him;" she continued. "I was just thinking what a dull time I was going to have, now that Lent is coming. Is he very lively? I know he is very entertaining."

"Please, Maud, don't tease me!" pleaded Burwell.

"Ugh, why are you so silly?" she asked.

"I can't help it, Maud; I can't help it! I love you so. Please come nearer."

She got up from her chair and sat on his lap.

"You silly baby!" she said, with her arm round his neck; "you think I fall in love with every man I see?"

"I should go mad, distracted, Maud, if I ever found out you loved some one else."

"I'll see that you don't find it out!" she said, with a smile in her eyes.

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"Don't talk like that, now; please don't! You'll always love me—always—won't you? Promise!"

But, instead of saying anything, her lips closed on his in a long, long kiss.

"And now, darling, you must go home! It's already half past ten, and you are still in evening dress. Wait, and I'll send out for a carriage."

"Oh, never mind! I can skip home very much quicker, and I am all right as it is; nobody will see, that I care!"

"I hope nobody has seen us out driving;" she said, as she was showing him downstairs; "I think it was wrong myself; I am going to tell Harry all about it."

"Do, and take a long, good rest. Mind, now, what you promised!"

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CHAPTER VI.

AN AFTERNOON TEA.

Nearly a fortnight had passed since the night of the ball. Spring was rapidly approaching. People were already talking about their plans for the summer, and the season was dwindling away in pale and feeble gayeties, in receptions and other social contrivances which were destitute of the vim and spirit characteristic of that life in its fullest activity.

The Prescotts were going down to Beverly where they had a very pretty unpretentious villa; the St. John's had not yet decided what to do, they had a residence in Nahant which they might open, but they were also contemplating going abroad.

"Yes, it all depends, Mr. Trench." Mrs. St. John was saying with a charming smile, pouring out tea in her little reception room while Trench sat near the tea table watching her.

"I hope you will decide to go abroad; thank you." Said Trench, taking a cup of tea from her and settling himself more comfortably in his chair.

"Why, Are you going back so soon?" she asked.

"It all depends!" he replied, smiling at her with the same significance with which she had smiled on him when she stated the same reason. Mrs. St. John's face became suddenly serious when she said,

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"Oh, no! I am afraid you misunderstood me, Mr. Trench, I didn't mean anything; that is, it does not depend on anything else but our inclination to go across, and Mr. St. John's engagements."

"I am sorry, Mrs. St. John, but I had no intention of forcing an explanation from you. With me, it simply depends on problematical circumstances. The Prescotts are very kind; you know we are distantly connected, and they are urging me to spend the summer with them."

"Then, why don't you?"

"If my inclinations alone were to be consulted, Mrs. St. John, I would stay here long enough to make you all tired of me; but unfortunately, I am somewhat interested in politics, and, as the coming parliamentary recess might be devoted to energetic campaigning I would feel bound to return and give all the assistance I possibly could."

"Mr. Prescott told me you were a member of Parliament;—let me give you another cup of tea—the last time I was over in England I went to the House of Commons."

"Really?"

"Yes, I was ever so much interested, I think English politics fascinating."

"I am sorry I had not the pleasure of your acquaintance, then—thank you, two lumps, if you please—I would have been but too happy to take you round."

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"Well, you don't know yet but that I might make you happy sooner than you expect."

"That cannot be!" replied Trench mechanically.

"Why? Is it because you are always expecting it?"

"I should be very miserable if I always only expected to be happy. I am usually contented with the present."

Trench was looking at her intently when he said it, but his gaze was serious, and it seemed more observant than communicative. Mrs. St. John's head was drooping slightly, and she seemed absorbed in watching the slice of lemon in her cup of tea.

"And I?" she said in a relaxed tone; "I always hunt the future for real happiness, though I take the present as it comes."

"That is wrong, Mrs. St. John," Trench said in a soft but serious voice. "We must make our present happy or be happy in the effort of making it so. This is beautiful, Mrs. St. John! Please don't stir; it is very beautiful; if you could only see it!" for Trench, as he was talking, had suddenly glanced up and noticed Mrs. St. John's head, all a liquid, burning gold. Her fluffy and curly hair was illuminated with the rays of the setting sun which shed in it a deep, almost crimson light, and transfusing it with an alluringly mysterious color, the color which Trench had only once seen before, at sundown on a marble pillar in the church of St. Marco.

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Mrs. St. John turned her head quickly toward Trench, only to see him look disappointed.

"What is beautiful? What are you seeing?" she asked.

"Your head, Mrs. St. John. Pardon me, but your hair in that position was lighted up and looked inexpressibly beautiful. What is it? An apple of gold in a net-work of silver? No! that's a very poor comparison to what it was!"

"I am sorry I stirred, if it was so lovely! Is it back now?" she asked, trying to resume her former position.

"No, not yet! A little lower, if you please; no, not quite so much; no—no, it doesn't have the same effect."

"It must have been a delusion. Is it right now?"

"No, there is less light this way than before."

"Well, will you adjust it, please?"

Trench rose from his seat with alacrity and stepped by her side. He stooped over her, gently took her head in his hands and softly moved it back to its former position.

But at the touch of her head, a thrill ran over his whole body and his emotions were so great that he could not speak. Mrs. St. John sat still, breathless.

"Is it right now?" she asked faintly.

Trench stepped back and looked at it.

"Yes; and it is more beautiful than before. I

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could almost believe that you were the Madonna and that it was the sacred aureole—that light on your head."

"You would find it a delusion, in the future." She said faintly when they were interrupted by the en trance of Harry St. John.

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CHAPTER VII.

MR. ST. JOHN ENTERS.

Trench who felt somewhat embarrassed when Mr. St. John entered was quickly reassured by the unconcerned manner of Mrs. St. John. She still remained in the position he had put her, not moving her head an inch. As the light which was falling on it was rapidly fading and quickly becoming almost purple, her hair was also rapidly transforming in color and was now a mass of dark, crimson lines and shadowed gold.

"Will you have some tea, Harry?" she asked without moving, after Trench and St. John had exchanged greetings.

"If you please, Maud!"

"Well, then, you'll have to pour it out yourself, I can't stir till the sun is down."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked St. John in surprise.

"Nothing, but I can't stir my head; it's so lovely in that light! Mr. Trench has been sitting and admiring it all the afternoon!"

Trench looked bewildered a moment, but soon began to smile. "I couldn't help noticing how lovely it was, the play of lights and shadows." He remarked, looking more at Mrs. St. John, who was half smiling herself.

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"It is exquisite, Maud, and you needn't stir! I'll pour myself out a cup of tea, though I don't know yet whether I want it at all," said St. John rising and walking toward the tea table.

"Oh, Mr. St. John!" Trench began, "I came to thank you for the honor of including me amongst the guests of your club; I hope you didn't take too much trouble."

"Oh, not at all, not at all! There was no trouble in it, whatever. I was only too glad to show you that we are willing to be hospitable even if we can't show much of it. I trust you'll avail yourself of it, it's quite a pretty club," St. John was saying as he went back to his seat.

"Yes, it looks very comfortable and very handsome."

"I don't think you are a bit interested now in the light of my hair, so I will not strain my neck any longer," Mrs. St. John broke in," though I was ready to suffer if I could only excite admiration. What about your club, Harry? Is it the Brahmin's? You must go to it very often, Mr. Trench. I often wish I were a man if only to belong to a club!"

"It is a glorious ambition, Maud!" observed St. John; "I often wished I were a woman to be able to belong to a sewing circle, didn't you, Mr. Trench?"

"Not for the sake of a sewing circle, but to participate in the after-dinner conversation!" replied Trench.

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"And this reminds me!" burst out Mrs. St. John; "you'll stay to dinner, Mr. Trench, won't you? We'll dine en-famille if you don't mind that. Oh, you needn't talk about dressing. We won't dress either, do stay!"

"Of course you'll stay, Mr. Trench!" St. John urged.

"I would like to ever so much; it is very kind of you to ask me, but I am afraid my hosts will wait for me."

"Oh, you needn't mind that! I'll send over the man with a note that we have kept you. You'll stay, won't you?"

"Thank you, with the utmost pleasure." Trench consented.

"You'll excuse me, Mr. Trench, if I dress. I have got to go out, Maud, for a couple of hours after dinner, but I trust you will make yourself thoroughly at home here!" said St. John, leaving the room with his wife to go upstairs.

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CHAPTER VIII.

BURWELL CALLS ON THE PRESCOTTS.

Soon after Trench had gone out to call on the St. Johns, Burwell called on the Prescotts. Burwell was very much at home there and on familiar terms with the whole household. He ran up to the parlor where he rummaged about some books, magazines and papers that were scattered on the tables and made himself at ease while waiting for somebody to receive him.

When a few minutes later Miss Prescott entered the room and they were seated again, Burwell began to inquire for the rest of the family.

"Where's Willie?" he asked. "He is a nice fellow; catch me waiting for him again! We had an appointment at the Brahmin's last night; he was going to bring Trench with him and we were going to do something and they didn't turn up at all!"

"Oh, I don't think they were to blame for it," Miss Prescott began. "They couldn't help it; they wanted to go ever so much."

"But they might have had common decency and sent up word not to wait for them!"

"Yes, that's what Mr. Trench suggested. But Willie said it didn't matter as he knew you wouldn't wait long and so they didn't. And they really

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couldn't go; they couldn't help it. Mrs. Sampson called here last night, and, you know, she has got a wild proposal."

"She usually has, ever since Mr. Sampson's proposal to her." Muttered Burwell.

"Well, listen!" said Miss Prescott, glancing at him with a half smile on her face. "She suggests a something or other, I don't know what you call it, but she means to have a number of people go out of town somewhere and have a supper, and you know, it's perfectly wild!" she added, lowering the tone of her voice and distending her eyes.

"Yes, it's ghastly;" replied Burwell, adapting his tone to hers and staring with the same look.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Miss Prescott, deprecating his mimicry of her. "She is going to have some ballet-dancer or actress perform for us. I think it's wild, don't you?"

"I'll think it over. Well, what does she want of you?"

"Oh, she wants Willie to organize it, and they made out a list last night whom to invite. It isn't going to be very large, only a few people."

"But select and of our own set?" said Burwell satirically.

"Don't talk nonsense! Here's the list if you would like to see it."

Burwell took up the list and was glancing over the names with very opposite commentaries.

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"I see," he said, "that you and I are included. Well, that's good! Then there's Mrs. St. John and Harry. Oh, Harry is famous for his tastes of the ballet; and then, there isn't Mr. Trench! Oh, yes, I beg your pardon, here he is! On the whole I think it will do! Here you are!" he exclaimed suddenly as he saw Prescott enter the room, and on the latter beginning to apologize for last night's disappointment, Burwell added:

"Oh, not at all, my dear fellow! Don't mind; it was rather shabby, but then, I'll forgive you since you've included me in the list."

"I knew you had good taste, and then Mrs. Sampson suggested that in case Mrs. St. John might want an escort, we'd better have you."

"So there was a dispute about it, eh?" queried Burwell.

"Oh, don't mind him; don't mind Willie!" exclaimed Miss Prescott. "He's only fibbing; nobody ever said anything of the kind; but you know," she added in a subdued voice, "a really funny thing happened with Mr. Trench!"

"When, last night?" asked Burwell.

"Yes; when Mrs. Sampson was here. You know Mr. Trench hasn't called yet on the Sampsons, though Mrs. Sampson has invited him ever so many times. Well, she asked him again last night, to which he consented with his usual English solemnity, and then as ed her suddenly, where she lived?

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You can't imagine how thoroughly taken back she was by the question; she couldn't believe her ears and turned it all off by asking Willie to bring him to them next Thursday. It was very amusing; you should have heard him talk about her afterward in his stolid English fashion."

"I wish I had;" said Burwell ironically.

"Well, you'll have an opportunity of hearing him often now!" Prescott joined in. "St. John has extended to him the hospitality of the Brahmin's!"

"He has? Confound it! That's just what I was going to do!"

"Well, my dear fellow, you needn't worry about it," Prescott said patronizingly; "you'll always have time enough to do a good act in your life. Benevolence like Heaven is one of the good things of the future, and we needn't be in a hurry to overtake it. What is it, Joe?" he asked, turning around to the servant, who entered the room carrying a letter on the tray.

"Oh, it's for you, Mamie!" he added, as he glanced at the address and handed her the note.

Miss Prescott took up the note, apologized to Burwell and read it.

"Oh!" she exclaimed; "that's all right, Joe—no answer! Isn't it too bad, Willie? Mrs. St. John has made Mr. Trench stay to dinner with her to-night, and I thought we were going to have a lovely time

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all by ourselves. Mamma is away and won't return to-night, and I was going to ask Mr. Burwell to stay to dinner!"

"And I was going to propose to go to the theater afterward," Prescott added.

"And I was going to propose to go and fetch him!" Burwell chimed in.

"Do, please do!"

"Oh, not now! after dinner, of course!" rejoined Burwell. "I hope, though, this won't interfere with the invitation you were extending to me, will it?"

"Well, we'll tell you after dinner!" said Miss Prescott, rising and excusing herself to them for a few minutes.

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CHAPTER IX.

BURWELL'S TORMENTING SUSPICIONS.

It was nearly half past seven when they were through dinner, and immediately afterward Prescott began to hint to Burwell that if they were going to the theater this evening he'd better go at once and fetch Trench from the St. Johns.

"Tell him he must come!" Miss Prescott added to her instructions.

"Yes; by the gracious sovereign command, he must go to the theater to night! Tell him that and he will understand. And another thing, Burwell, I want you to comprehend is that we have precious little time left if we want to get any decent seats!" added Prescott as he saw his friend out of doors.

The St. Johns did not live very far, and within a few minutes of rapid walking, Burwell found himself at the door of their residence. He knew the house so well, he knew the habits of the people so intimately that in scanning the lights in the windows, he could almost know exactly where Mrs. St. John was sitting, if not what she was doing. He ran up the stairs eagerly, and the disagreeable sensation which had agitated him since the moment he heard that Trench was staying there to an informal dinner,

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suddenly gave way to a buoyant feeling at the realization of the surprise his appearance would cause Maud and the pleasure of the animated familiarity of their expected interchange of badinage.

He rang the bell and while he was waiting for the door to be opened, he suddenly thought he must contrive to kiss Maud before he left; he was sure he could do it while Harry went downstairs to see Trench off.

The door opened and Burwell stepped in without ceremony, asking more as a matter of habit than anything else, whether Mr. St. John was at home.

"No, sir!" replied the man; "he has gone out a few minutes ago!"

"Gone out?" asked Burwell in mild surprise. "Is Mrs. St. John in her boudoir or in the parlor?"

"The madame is not at home, sir!"

Burwell turned round and frowned.

"Not at home?" he asked. "Are you sure, Patrick?"

"Yes, sir!" the man answered stolidly.

"Where is she gone to, do you know? Did she go out alone?"

"I don't know, sir."

"That's strange! Tell her that I called," he said, as if in a stupor.

"Yes, sir!" said the man, with the same impenetrable stolidity, opening the door for him.

Burwell ran down the steps, and found himself

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in the street, walking as if dazed. Of course, she was at home! He did not doubt it at all. Why, he saw Trench's hat and coat in the hall, and he was upstairs with her! The last thought came upon him like a flash illuminating a suggestion. He would go and verify it. He wanted to write a note. In fact, when he thought of it, he had a mind to run upstairs into her boudoir, with the excuse of writing the note, as he was in the habit of doing. It would be a grand coup!—he thought; but, as quickly he reflected that he should not do it.

"Oh, I forgot!" he said, as the servant opened the door. "I want to write a note, Patrick. Have you got a piece of paper and pencil? Never mind! my card will do. Thanks! Now, if you'll fetch me an envelope I'll be much obliged!"

And he was left alone in the hallway, bending over the table in the effort of composing his note. But for a second or two he did not write. He stood stooping and listening. He thought he heard rustling upstairs, moving; he thought he heard voices. He listened more intently.

"Sorry you were not at home," he wrote—oh, yes! he heard voices; there was no doubt about it at all!

"—Very sorry you were out when I called," he continued; "but, of course, as you did not expect me, I could not complain—" Hark! Wasn't that her voice laughing? Confound Patrick for banging

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the doors!—Oh, yes; and there's his overcoat and hat and that rum umbrella of his! "of your absence," he added, as he heard the man's approach from the adjoining room, "especially since I called for Mr. Trench, to take him to the theater. However, we cannot all be in fate's favors, which are not as all-embracing as the sun's rays, that fall equally on the good and the humble."

"There, that will do, Patrick!" he said, unbending and handing the card to the servant. "If you will give this to Mrs. St. John as soon as she comes home, I'll be much obliged. Thanks!"

And Burwell found himself once more in the street, striding at a rapid pace toward the Prescotts.

Burwell walked as if in a dream. His mind was enveloped in a dense fog, a cloud that seemed to be slowly shifting and moving without in the least breaking to let light pierce through it. Everything, as yet, was in conglomerated confusion, and the only distinct image in his mind was the picture of Maud and Trench being closeted together in her room, and her refusing to see him! God—What all this meant to him! What all this suggested to him. . . .

He hardly knew yet what to think or what to say when he found himself inside the Prescotts' house, with Miss Prescott and her brother standing in front of him.

"They say-er-they had gone out," Burwell stam-

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mered out. "That is, Mrs. St. John and Trench had gone-er-were not at home."

"Gone out?" asked Prescott. "Where did they go?"

"Oh, I suppose Mrs. St. John took Mr. Trench to the theater. Let's all go, and we may meet them there. It would be great fun!" said Miss Prescott.

Burwell glanced at her in a mechanical, dazed way, as if his real comprehension were an immeasurable distance from the present.

"Do, let's come!" Prescott persisted; but suddenly noticing Burwell's vacant stare, he exclaimed: "Why, Burwell, you look as pale as a ghost! What's the matter with you?"

Burwell strived to look composed.

"Oh, nothing; nothing in particular," he said, with an effort at smiling. "Only, strange things happen, Prescott; very strange things happen."

By this time Miss Prescott's solicitude was keenly excited, and both she and her brother stood near him, anxiously watching him.

"I see that they do," remarked Prescott. "Only, what's the matter with you? What did you see? What happened to you?"

"Oh, nothing particularly strange; nothing more singular than the changing of the moon; yet a very singular thing is the moon changing; isn't it?" Burwell smiled in earnest.

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"Oh, he's moonstruck; that's all. Well, shall we go to the theater? It's getting pretty late. As it is, we'll have to miss the first act."

"Oh, Willie! Don't you see that Mr. Burwell doesn't feel well?" Miss Prescott said, reproachfully.

"Don't mind, please!" Burwell broke in, with considerable animation. "Don't mind me; I'll be all right in a minute! It's nothing but ghosts; I met my double—that's all. I'll get over it pretty soon!"

"No, my dear fellow, you won't get over it so soon as you think, if you met your double!" Prescott joined in. "For my part, I would run miles to avoid seeing myself, and I assure you not half the suicides are committed now to the minute that would be if we were in the habit of meeting our doubles. Well, then, since we are not going to the theater, let's go upstairs and have private theatricals of our own! Come, Burwell, we'll play Hamlet; we've got a ghost to start with."

But Burwell pleaded indisposition and excused himself for that night. He thought he'd go home and lie down, he said, taking leave of the Prescotts, and promising to take the ample care of himself which Miss Prescott enjoined upon him as he was leaving.

Burwell, when he found himself in the street, started off with a bound in the direction of his rooms, but he suddenly vacillated and thought; it

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was not exactly what he wanted to do, then. His impulse was to turn round and walk back toward the St. John's residence. He hesitated for a moment, just to collect his thoughts, and then walked briskly down Beacon street.

His mind was in such a whirl, his imagination was so rapidly revolving the images of Maud and Trench and his own figure, that, for a minute or two, he walked as if in a stupor, seeing his own image as detached and distinct from himself as if it were really the double, of which Prescott spoke.

Then his thoughts began to clear. The tumultuous, poignant sensations which had agitated his breast were rapidly being succeeded by a slow and heavy feeling of realization that his worst presentiments had passed into realities—that Maud was no longer faithful to him!

Burwell was passing the St. John's house, and he looked carefully over the lighted windows, the closely drawn draperies of one room where he knew Mrs. St. John was at the time. He did not walk very far when he turned round and repassed the house, looking as intently on its facade as before, with a strange feeling of satisfaction that he was not mistaken, that all this was reality—an ugly reality—which he had had the misfortune to discover, and which he was forced to recognize.

Suddenly he walked across the street, placed himself against a railing, and stood there, watching

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the entrance to St. John's residence. His action was mechanical at first, but it was soon animated with a resolution to stay there and wait and watch. He had not concerted any definite plan yet, but he experienced a strange impulse to verify his worst surmises; to be sure of all corroborating details, as if he were a lawyer and was anxious to substantiate with irrefragible evidence the allegations with which he was to confront, to-morrow, a dexterous defendant.

He stood against the railing, motionless and drooping, his mind heavy, but his eyes watchfully on the alert. The night was chilly, but fresh and bright. Clouds traversed the heavens, but they were fleecy and transparent, and through them countless stars shone in mysterious lustre, while from the eastern horizon came the trembling rays of a young crescent moon that seemed to shed her light with the uncertainty of an infant's endeavors.

Burwell was getting momentarily colder and colder, but he still stood there as if planted on the place, his eyes riveted on the door across the street, his coat-collar upturned and hiding most of his face. Once or twice when he was disturbed from his place of observation by some arrivals at the house against which he was leaning, he slunk away to some spot where he could still maintain a watch of the house, and as soon as the place was clear again he returned to his former position.

A half hour passed this wise; an hour succeeded.

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Burwell was chilled to his bones, but he still stood there, waiting and watching. The door across the way opened once or twice, but it was only to admit a messenger, or to let out a domestic who preferred the front entrance to the back, when she could do so without fear of detection. Already the clock of a neighboring church had tolled out ten, and still Burwell stood, his eyes riveted on those lighted windows and watchfully alert on the door. He felt uncomfortable, gloomy, almost stupid, when all of a sudden the rumbling noise of a carriage attracted his attention, and a moment afterward his faculties were all revivified at the sight of a tall figure alighting from the vehicle, which he recognized to be that of St. John.

For a moment he felt impelled to run across the street and join him, but he hesitated, while St. John had time to disappear within the doorway, and the next moment the street and the house resumed their former aspect of undisturbed quiet.

Burwell still did not stir from his place. A policeman passed and looked carefully at the suspiciously crouched figure, but Burwell appeared so unconcerned with the scrutiny that the guardian of peace remained unperturbed himself.

Burwell could not help experiencing a grim sort of satisfaction at the sight of St. John. "Oh, yes!" he thought; he could see it plainly, as if he were present on the spot, in fact one of the actors. How

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Harry trots upstairs unsuspectingly happy, and is met by the composed countenance of Maud, who has something strange or amusing to propound to him, as if that had been the chief occupation of the evening both to her and to that damn Englishman! Oh, yes; he can see it all, for he has been in the same position so many, many times!

Burwell even smiled at the last thought, and the smile opened up quite a humorous view to his perceptions.

"So she did not expect him this evening," he thinks, "eh? and thought it would be a good opportunity for Trench to spend the evening there, eh? Oh, she is a clever one, Maud is! Just as if she could deceive him! He knew it all from the beginning, from the time she met Trench, and her acting at the ball; he expected it all! But, good God! it is perfectly outrageous! it's terrible!"

His reflections were soon interrupted by the opening of the door across the street, and by the light from the hall he could see Trench's figure bowing goodnight to St. John, and behind him, half leaning on the banisters, he caught a glimpse of Maud, of her face all radiant and ripply, looking as if she had just smiled happiness on himself and his future.

As soon as the door was closed and Trench ran down the steps, Burwell hastened to cross the street and follow him. His first impulse was to join him,

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but his numbness of body from the exposed cold and the host of conflicting sensations that agitated him at the sight of the man whom he regarded as his dangerous and successful rival rather deterred him in his impulse. He fell back a little, but kept Trench in sight, and just as the latter was turning down toward the Prescotts, he cried out to him:

"Hello! Is that you, Mr. Trench?"

Trench stopped and looked round, and recognizing Burwell, he asked him pleasantly whether he had not been walking behind him all the time, since he imagined he had heard the same footsteps for the last couple of minutes.

"Yes;" replied Burwell, "I overtook you near St. John's house; in fact, had called for you the early part of the evening. Miss Prescott suggested to go to the theater or something of that sort, but concluded that a good time couldn't be improved with interruptions."

"The St. Johns are very charming people." Trench remarked.

"Yes, awfully charming; particularly Mrs. St. John. Harry is my cousin; awfully proud of the connection. Appropriate name is Mrs. St. John to her, isn't it? She reminds me of St. Cecelia at her best, doesn't she? It's a queer world, and virtue only triumphs on the stage; isn't that so, Mr. Trench, or is it different in England? Remember me to the Prescotts; tell them, please, that I am better, and

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that instead of being haunted by my double, I am now after my double, myself. They'll understand; goodnight!" and Burwell walked off at a rapid trot toward his club.

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CHAPTER X.

A STORMY INTERVIEW.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when Burwell hurried up the steps of the St. John's residence. It was drizzly and disagreeable outside, the weather threatening momentarily to change into a chilly pour-down of rain, and Burwell rang the bell with the air of a man who had made up his mind not to stand any nonsense in general, and not to be kept waiting long in particular.

Mrs. St. John was at home, in her boudoir and, when Burwell entered the room, he found her sitting by her small table, writing.

"Awfully glad to see you!" she said without raising her head or interrupting her work; "will you excuse me a moment? I am writing this note to Mrs. Sampson."

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Burwell huskily, holding his hat in his hand and looking anywhere but at her.

Burwell looked pale; he had almost a wan expression covering his face, but his lips were pursed up and his features were contracted as if he were agitating a strong resolution. He waited; then she was through, and stood up, looking as radiant and

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ripply as if she had had no other thought on her mind but the pleasurable sensation of seeing him there, when all of a sudden she stopped, her face relapsing into the serious cast which it reflected a few moments before, and she exclaimed:

"Why! what's the matter with you; are you sick?"

"N–no!" came back his grumbling reply, and he turned away his head.

"But you look pale! You look worried; has anything happened?" she queried, more solicitously.

"N–no! What were you writing?"

"Oh, I was just writing to Mrs. Sampson, to say that I thought the out-of-door party a capital idea, don't you? I think it perfectly wild!"

"Are you going?"

"Yes, of course! and, you know, I am awfully sorry, but I asked Mr. Trench to accompany me there, or, rather, Harry asked him to be our guest, and you know I couldn't help it!"

"No, of course not!"

"He was here last night when the note came—" she began, when Buwrell interrupted her.

"Oh, yes; he was here, and you were so entrancingly busy together that you couldn't see me when I called!"

"You called? When?"

"Last night, when Trench was here! I happened to call for him; the Prescotts wanted to go to the theater, and I was told that you were not 'at home.'"

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"You called last night? Why! the man never told me word about it!"

"No, I suppose not! You instructed him to tell everybody you were not 'at home,' and, of course, he wouldn't remind you of it. Didn't you get my note?"

"Yes; but I thought you left it to-day. I didn't come down this morning till late, till nearly twelve."

Burwell felt a sickening sensation come over him as her last words recalled to him certain reminiscences.

"Maud!" he said, after a moment's silence, trying to master his voice, "Maud! you promised me one thing when you said you loved me, didn't you? You promised that if ever you loved somebody else, you would not deceive me; you would come and tell me!"

"Well?"

"I don't care! I can't stand this any longer! Why do you act like this? Why don't you tell me you've got tired of me? That the Englishman is a more attractive novelty to you? You know I know you pretty well by this time, Maud! I know what your 'not at homes' mean; I know what it is, to be here when Harry is away, and that sort of thing! I know—"

"Did you come here to tell me all you knew?" asked Mrs. St. John in a deliberate voice.

"Yes, Maud! I nearly went crazy last night! I

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don't mind so much for myself! I knew what I might expect when you first said you loved me, when you first told me about your feelings toward Harry; it isn't that! But I lay thinking last night—Oh, God! I can't go on!"

"Please do, please go on!"

"I lay thinking it all over, I saw it all so clearly, and I nearly went distracted! For heaven's sake, Maud, have pity on yourself! You are so beautiful, so accomplished, so adorned, so proud—please don't let anybody mar you, soil you, Maud!"

"Mr. Burwell!"

"I can't help it, I must speak to you! You said so many times you were all mine, that your past and your future were in my moulding, that I couldn't help it! I must talk! If it were wrong for you to love me—I loved you as I could ever love any woman! You know how faithful and devoted I've been to you! You know how my whole life has been wrapped up in yours, and to see you all of a sudden give yourself up to a stranger, to an adventurer, who will use you and despise you to-morrow, and will go away forgetting everything but your shame—"

"This will do, Mr. Burwell! I have heard enough of your insults!" she interrupted. "If you choose to believe everything about me that you imagine, you are at liberty to do so, but I cannot listen to your advice. I am not your paid mistress!"

Burwell felt as if something had been shot

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through his body. He looked at her perfectly blank for a moment, and then burst out in a loud, hollow laughter.

"Not my paid mistress!" he exclaimed. Not my paid mistress, eh? Ha-ha-ha! So the comedy is ended here, is it? Well, Maud, you've played your part well! The most foolish woman is clever enough to blind the wisest of men and lead him by the nose if she's a mind to, and I don't feel so confoundedly cut up for being played with by such a smart woman as you are! Oh, well the denouement had to come sooner or later, hadn't it? So what's the odds 'twixt a day or a year, since, you see, you weren't my paid mistress, and so, of course, I couldn't be sure of you, oh-ho-ho-ha!"

'Mr. Burwell!" exclaimed Maud, her face pallid, her eyes glistening, her figure erect to a commanding attitude, and her hand imperiously pointing to the door.

"Why, Maud, my dear!" came suddenly St. John's voice as he appeared at the threshold of the door to which Maud was pointing. "Why, what's the matter?" he asked, looking inquisitively from Burwell to Maud and from Maud to Burwell.

The latter, who had become pale and silent at the sight of Maud's sudden transformation, looked extremely embarrassed at the unexpected appearance of St. John's figure, but Maud had as instantly relaxed her rigid attitude and her severe expression

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"'MR. BURWELL,' EXCLAIMED MAUD, HER FACE PALLID, HER EYES GLISTENING."

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of face, and said almost with a smile on her features, so pleasant was her tone:

"Oh, Harry! Frank is so provoking! He doesn't do a thing I tell him to do, and he is perfectly stupid"—but her voice began to quiver, she felt she could not control herself any longer, that tears were mastering her; she covered her face with her hands and rushed out from the room.

St. John stood amazed. He had never seen Maud cry in his life to his recollection, and he kept looking inquiringly at Burwell, who stood morose and sombre looking, with his head drooping on his chest, his hands nervously twitching with his hat.

"What does this mean, Frank?" asked St. John perplexedly.

"Oh, I don't know, Harry! I can't tell you; Maud may if she likes, only I am a damn fool. I know she'll never forgive me!"

And saying this he rushed out of the room and out of the house.

Before the St. Johns were through dinner on the same evening, a note was brought in addressed to Harry St. John, which on perusing, the latter handed over to his wife. She glanced at it, not without misgiving at first, but on reading it over, said: "You'd better go and see him, Harry, but tell him that he knows me better than to think that I could forget anything of the kind!"

"You are very unforgiving, very hard at times,

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Maud!" her husband replied, secretly admiring the clouded, indignant expression playing on her features. "I am sure if I knew what he did I would not think it worth a moment's resentment;—er you haven't told me yet what happened?" he asked mildly.

"No!" she replied with a smile, sipping gently some sherry.

He smiled back at her, and while lighting a cigar he attempted to emphasize his hints by saying:

"I'm sure I can't imagine what happened! I never saw you so worked up, Maud, in the whole of my life! And Frank, also, poor fellow! He looked as if he were damning the earth for being too solid to swallow him. Er-er-may I know, Maud, what took place here?"

Maud smiled brightly and did not say a word in reply while the man was placing the coffee before her, and when the servant left she laughed out at the sight of her husband's face still animated with a timid curiosity.

"Oh, well, Frank said a great number of things which he couldn't have said if he were the man I always believed him to be. It really doesn't matter, only I am afraid I could never forgive it, and I am sure I couldn't forget it!" and she sipped her coffee.

St. John looked at her and looked at the tip

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of his cigar, then examined carefully the stump of it, and without looking at her he asked hesitatingly:

"Er-did-er-did Frank make love to you or something of that sort, eh?"

Maud glanced at him searchingly, and smilingly replied:

"How absurd, Harry! A woman can always forgive the flattery of love-making, however she may tell the man that she resents it. Don't you think you'd better attend to Burwell's note, Harry, and call on him at the club at once? And, oh, will you please mail that note to Mr. Trench I left on the table? I have invited him to dine with us Tuesday next."

"Tuesday? Why, I'm sorry, but I've got to be over in New York that night. Didn't I tell you we've got a meeting of the directors? I must have forgotten, then!"

"Oh, well! I can put off Mr. Trench till you return!" she said indifferently; "you needn't mail that note!" she added, rising from the table.

"Not at all, Maud! Why, by all means have him dine here; it will be ever so much pleasanter for you, and give him my regrets! I really must go, though, otherwise Frank will chew his moustache off in impatience!" and St. John, without going upstairs with his wife, called the man to help him on with his coat and went outside.

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CHAPTER XI

A TETE-A-TETE.

Maud went upstairs into her boudoir. She did not have anything particular to do, though she was planning a musicale for which she intended to send out invitations that evening; but, for the moment, she felt disinclined to take up such work, and she sat down on the couch near the window, picking up listlessly an evening "Transcript" and carelessly glancing over its contents. She did not read anything. She thought for a second that she ought to go up and look at the baby, as he had been crying all the afternoon; but instead she rang the bell and sent the servant up to inquire of the nurse how baby was. He was asleep, she was told, sound asleep and evidently much better. She ordered the servant then to kindle a fire, and when he left she remained alone, apparently still looking at the paper, but in reality letting her thoughts ruminate in entangling distances. Her imagination was not of that temper which could hold any image long enough to conjure up vividly all its features. She let things appear and disappear in her vision, and no sooner did her mind begin to apprehend them clearly, when her feelings would color and cloud them, and

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mingle distantly past events with remotely future probalities, or with her present distinct, but unconnected moods.

She felt oppressed, heavily oppressed, as she sat there in that beautifully illuminated room adorned with lovely artistic contrivances, and embellished with that indefinable charm the secret of which the exquisite feminine taste alone is cognizant.

She began to think of Burwell, and involuntarily her mind depicted in rapid succession vague memories of their love and their relations to each other; of their first meeting, and their gradual drifting into friendship and then into love, of how it all began and how it all ended!

"Oh, yes!" she thought; "this is the end of everything between them!" The thought evoked a sensation of poignant sorrow within her, a sensation tremulous and exquisite enough to force bitter tears into her eyes. What had she not done for him! She remembered the first tempest of her impulses; she remembered her giving herself up to him; she recollected swiftly numberless small incidents of their life and their love, and they all seemed to concentrate a harder mold of disappointment for her. And yet, after all, she thought, as she remembered, what was there in their love and their relations? They all drifted before her, all flitted crowdingly before her mind; and as the reminiscences passed and paled in the distance, her heart beat more and more lan-

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guidly at the realization of her past, while the presentiment of indifference was rapidly stealing over her most inward being! And, then, Mr. Trench...

"Mr. Trench, madame!" she suddenly heard the servant's voice at her door.

"Show him up!" she said with a start; and hastening to compose herself, she jumped up, glanced in the looking-glass, hurriedly smoothed her hair and when Trench entered the room she greeted him with the brightest of smiles.

"I am sure you'll think me abusing your hopsitality," said Trench as he stepped into the room and shook hands with her. "I am intruding so often—"

"Not at all; I am charmed to see you. I was just thinking of you. Sit down!"

"Thank you; but I came to tell you, Mrs. St. John, that my worst fears have been realized much quicker than I really dreamed! My mail, this morning, has warned me of my duties, and I am afraid I'll have to return to London very much sooner than I expected in my worst calculations—"

"Oh, no; Mr. Trench! You don't really mean that you have to go, if you don't want to?" Maud asked, hardly able to conceal the agitation which his announcement caused within her mind. She was pale for a moment, her eyes were emitting a strange lustre and her features were animated with a breathless curiosity.

"I am sorry, Mrs. St. John, that it is a case in

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which my movements are regulated without my volition at all! You see, those English politics I was talking of yesterday have come to the front much sooner than the course of ordinary events might have augured. Unfortunately, the constituency which I intended to contest at the general election has suddenly been made vacant by the untimely death of its representative in Parliament, and the Executive Committee have sent me orders to prepare myself at once for the contest. They are sure that I could carry the seat in the Liberal interests."

"Oh, well! He had no business to die!" she said vexatiously.

Trench smiled.

"It's a poor business at its best!" he said. "But I came to ask you to release me from that very pleasant engagement which you offered me yesterday, of escorting you to that out-of-town affair, you know."

"You don't mean to say you are going so soon as that?" she exclaimed, her face almost depicting fear.

"I am afraid I will have to start some time next week, at the end of the week, the latest! Won't you excuse me, really and truly excuse me, Mrs. St. John?"

"I won't!" she exclaimed, her face brightening up for a moment in the prospect that her action might be a hindrance to him.

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Trench glanced up quickly, and, as rapidly, a comment flashed across his mind, how beautiful she was at that moment! There was something so strangely and strongly expressive in her features and her face, an expression that stirred a dormant but familiar feeling in his own breast, that, involuntarily, his eyes remained resting on her while hers were drooping, and the thick, lovely eyelashes were enhancing her ever-changing and sensitive complexion.

Suddenly she looked up, and their eyes meeting they seemed to kindle a smile on their faces, which, in Maud, dissolved itself into a gentle laugh.

"You laugh?" she said, ignoring the fact that he was only smiling; "but I won't release you from that engagement, nor forgive you if you really break it; I won't!"

"But, Mrs. St. John!" he pleaded.

'No, I won't, and I can't!" she said, still smiling, while he regarded her with no inconsiderable amusement. "And now I'll see what Englishmen can do under such circumstances," she said, falling back in her chair.

"What would Americans do?" he asked, leaning forward.

"When?"

"Under similar circumstances. Suppose an American were under moral obligations to something so generic as a political party; suppose they

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relied on his service, and suppose he really had the welfare of his party at heart, what would he do?" asked Trench.

"But you left out the other supposes," said Maud.

"Oh, yes! Well, suppose there was something else he really preferred to do; suppose even the whole bent of his inclination was toward something else."

"But you left out his promise to a woman."

"Well, then, suppose he made a promise which all his inclinations prompted him, tempted him, Mrs. St. John, to keep, what would an American do under the circumstances?"

"What would he do if he made two promises? An American, Mr. Trench, would keep them both."

"How? If they are contradictory, if they are impossible, Mrs. St. John? Suppose he wavered between duty and inclination, what would an American do?"

"Oh, if it were only a question of mere inclination, he would give it up for duty, of course."

"And if the motive were stronger than an inclination, what would he do then, Mrs. St. John?" asked Trench, looking at her scrutinizingly.

"You mean, if it were the old question between love and duty?" she asked, without looking, and endeavoring to appear indifferent. "An American, Mr. Trench, would decide for love, for it contains the highest duty!" and, looking up at him and smil-

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ing, she asked, "And an Englishman, what would an Englishman do?"

"If an Englishman thought it was love, he would not waver at all," Trench replied, deliberately, "unless that very love commanded him to hesitate."

"Does Miss Prescott say you ought to go?" asked Mrs. St. John suddenly, apparently engrossed in watching the flickering of the fire.

"Miss Prescott? No! The Prescotts have urged me to stay; they are very kind. Why, Mrs. St. John?"

"Oh, nothing! Only I know they'll all miss you ever so much. And we will, too, dreadfully. You know, Mr. Trench, it was only to-day I had a terrible row with one of my most intimate friends over you, and it's too bad that you have to go so soon."

"A row! over me, Mrs. St. John?"

"Yes, a dreadful one! Oh, I don't mind! Only I am sorry it was such a great friend."

"But, surely, Mrs. St. John, I was not the cause of anything so serious, of anything so disagreeable to you?"

"No, oh, no! You weren't to blame for anything that happened, but it was on account of you. Do you believe in fate, Mr. Trench?"

"Not more than I can help; only when fate forces itself upon me! May I know the cause of that unpleasantness?"

"Oh, nothing of any consequence to you, noth-

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ing that I can tell you, for the present at least! Only people are such fools sometimes! Why are there so many fools on earth, Mr. Trench, do you know?" she asked absent-mindedly.

"In order to prove that there are wise men—in heaven at least, Mrs. St. John," he said, the last in an undertone. "But if it was a fool who quarreled, my sympathies are less for his losing your friendship, though I am extremely sorry to have caused you such annoyance! I sincerely trust it won't be so serious as you imagine."

"So serious?" she repeated, suddenly rousing herself, "There is nothing serious in it! If people choose to be fools, they may go straight to thunder. I neither care nor regret! It is not in my nature to patch up things or to mend matters! Why, when things are at end, there is an end to them! I have no patience with forgiving and forgetting, have you? It's so conventional!"

"Your resentments are strong, Mrs. St. John!" said Trench, his eyes watching all the time the beautiful transformations her moods were working on the expression of her features, her eyes and her complexion. It seemed as if some lovely mysterious force were animating her soul and reflecting the grandeur of all her passions on the mirror of her face.

"Is that a bad sign, Mr. Trench?"

"No! It's a symbol of a direct and sincere soul. Strong resentments are frequently the shadows of

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the light of strong friendships of which the being is capable. For my part, I prefer the most dire hatred to weakly sentimentality."

"Do you believe in friendship?"

"Most decidedly! And you, Mrs. St. John?"

"I don't know! It's so hard now-a-days to be friends. Do all Englishmen believe the same, are all Englishmen like you; do they believe in love and friendship, and all that sort of thing?"

"We, in our country," Trench replied, "cannot speak for all generally. We are all, each according to his fancy, each according to his creed. As for myself, personally, Mrs. St. John"—and he looked up into her attentive face, "You know I wrote once a novel, before I left college."

"How wild!" she said adjusting herself in a more comfortable position, as if she were preparing to be greatly entertained.

"That's what most critics thought of my novel. They said it was the product of a very fantastic imagination."

"Were the adventures so thrilling?"

"I am afraid not very; unless you'd call the hero's fervent prayer that Providence might inspire the heroine with an affection for him; unless you'd call that thrilling, I don't think there were very many more affecting passages in this book. Only I wrote then, as I believed, and made the heroines good women and the heroes honest men, and the critics

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said, therefore, it was not an age for romantic writing, and condemned it on the ground that what we wanted now was realism."

"How stupid! Wasn't it a success, though?"

"Not very much of a success, Mrs. St. John. This was nearly fifteen years ago, and I called it, "Gentle Gwendolen."

"What a pretty name! Did you never write another novel?"

"No, not yet! but I often thought I would sometime after I had gathered more experience of the world and more knowledge of human nature. You know, I find it the greatest fault, with me, not to be able to study people. I often set out with the idea to study this or that person, analyze this or that personality, and before I know where I am, I find myself so interested in the people themselves that I forget all about observing them."

"How strange!" she said, apparently absent mindedly, her eyes and face, though, rivetted on Trench; and, then, as if suddenly coming to herself again, she said: "But have you changed in your belief of men and women, Mr. Trench, during the last fifteen years?"

"I don't know that I have, very much. I don't believe I could ever learn from experience. No matter what I learn, the next time I look at a good woman's face I forget it all, and my former faith comes back to me. There is more proof to me in a

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woman's eyes than there is in all the solidly sinister demonstrations of the world, and I think one tear of repentance from them would sooner restore my faith in their innocence than all their follies would convince me of their guilt."

Maud was slightly pale, her eyes were somewhat feverish and she betrayed evident symptoms of being inwardly agitated by some strong emotion.

"I wish all men were like that, Mr. Trench," she said in a low voice. "I think women would be ever so much better than they are. But as it is, I think that women become heartless and insincere, and all that, because men to whom they give themselves up, body and soul, are the first to disbelieve them and distrust them, if not hold them in contempt; don't you think so? Oh, I think it's a selfish world where honor and decency are only fashionable traditions:" she looked very sad.

"I can't understand it, Mrs. St. John, I can't understand it!" Trench said without looking at her. "I've been in the world long enough to know that things go wrong sometimes; well, what of it? None of us are gods and few of us are saints. Why not forgive and forget and help to mend things that are broken? I never could appreciate the fact of what you said. I know it's true! Men do such things; they laugh and sneer and sometimes despise the woman who has done most for them, but they must be contemptible ingrates whatever the actuating

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motive is. And as for women, I don't believe there's a woman in the world with a spontaneous impulse to guilt and badness. I don't believe there is a woman in creation who willingly would mar her purity; and as for men, who are responsible for all they do, I'd as soon crush the flower I am going to wear—why, Mrs. St. John, you don't feel well?" he exclaimed abruptly, when on looking up he saw her pale, almost faint-looking, her eyes welling up with tears.

"Oh, just a little indisposed! It's nothing; it'll pass over!" she said.

"Shall I ring the bell? I am afraid I've tired you terribly!"

"Please don't! Please don't trouble yourself in the least. I'll be all right in a minute; I am better even now. I don't know what came over me for a second, but, feel my pulse!"

In a instant Trench was at her side, kneeling on one knee with his fingers on her pulse. It beat rapidly and fitfully, though it was already becoming normal. They remained silent for a few seconds and Trench thought they were long minutes. A strange sensation swept over him as he knelt down and felt her hand. Eddies of emotions seemed to deluge his whole inward being and rapidly were sweeping over his brain and mind. He felt himself getting pale, he felt his breath coming and going fast, and he thought he could never utter a word, nor that he

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could ever gain strength enough to rise from his kneeling posture. He appeared to listen watchfully to the beating of the pulse, but everything was in pale and whirling confusion, and he only heard her breath coming and going, and now drawn in a long sigh.

He tried to rise without relinquishing her hand, without betraying the consciousness of his agitation, of his strong arresting impulse to remain and cling to her hand with his lips, with his whole being. It seemed as if something pent up in his nature had suddenly burst through, and he was possessed by a tempest of desires and sensations. He tried to control himself; a darkness seemed to roll off his vision as he rose, and, with an effort to steady his voice, he said in a whisper:

"It is beating rather fast; you are not very well!"

Then he stood up erect and was standing before her. Her hand was limp in his. She did not attempt to withdraw. She glanced up at him and her eyes were brilliant with liquid fire; her face was pale; she looked beautiful, but she drooped her head. A second or two passed. Slowly, almost breathlessly and blindly, Trench bent lower and lower till his lips reached her hand, when, with a sudden energy, she snatched it from his hold and drew away, exclaiming in a whisper:

"Not that! No, not that!"

Trench was as if stricken to the ground, and for

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a second he felt dark and cold and comfused, but the next moment he saw her eyes look caressingly and tenderly at him, and in an instant he was again by her side, she holding his hands, this time, and saying:

"And you won't go away? You'll stay by me, won't you?"

"Yes, if you'll let me!"

"And you will forgive me, and forget things, won't you?"

"I have nothing to forgive, but can't forget ever to ask your forgiveness!"

"Oh, I have had such a life! I must tell you all! You promise you will stay? Here's Harry coming back; you'll be to-morrow night at the Draytons, won't you? Come, kiss me quick; not this, but—" and she drew him from her hands to her lips and kissed him fervently and passionately.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE FASHIONABLE BOHEMIANS.

The Prescotts and Trench did not arrive at the Drayton reception till late in the evening. They had been dining out, and when they went upstairs the large music room was already filled with visitors, while in the boudoir and library, leading from it, young men and young girls were seated, as if anxious for a little more privacy. Miss Prescott and Trench walked into the boudoir where Mrs. Drayton was sitting and talking to Burwell, and both of them arose to receive the newcomers, Mrs. Drayton expressing particular gratification to Miss Prescott for having brought Trench there.

"Do sit down and make yourself at home, all!" Mrs. Drayton said; "and do you drink beer, Mr. Trench?"

"Yes, Mrs. Drayton; thank you!" replied Trench, sitting down on a settee near the window by Miss Prescott, while Burwell brought his chair nearer them.

"Why, this is Venice in Boston!" remarked Trench, as, in glancing through the window, he saw a large expanse of water reflecting from all sides the trembling lights of the lanterns. At a dis-

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tance a row of stately lights scintillated, expanded and contracted, looking sometimes almost like stars in a cold, dark and windy firmament.

"Isn't it perfectly lovely?" exclaimed Miss Prescott; "I think it's the most charming house in Boston. I love to sit in this corner; later in the spring it is perfectly beautiful!"

"It must be;" remarked Trench, taking a more comprehensive view through the window.

"You think so?" asked Burwell. "I prefer the little sitting-room at St. John's; you know which, Mr. Trench. I can sit there and look across Cambridge Bridge at night, and see the whirling lights to and fro, looking more like trailing snakes, and watch the stormy life going on there, while the waters lie calm and cool beneath you. Oh, it's really lovely! Have a cigarette, Mr. Trench?"

Trench looked round, inquiringly.

"Doesn't Mrs. Drayton object? And you, Miss Prescott?"

"No, not the least!" broke in Mrs. Drayton, who had come back with a mug of beer. "We rather like it; don't we, Mary? We know men like that sort of thing, and think it a bore to go to receptions where they have to sit stiff and dry, and talk all the time." She was striking a light and handing it to Trench. "So I let them do as they please here, and want them to make themselves at home. Oh, here you are, Willie! You needn't look so meek

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now! I haven't forgiven you yet what you said the other night to Mrs. St. John!"

"Beware, beware what you are saying and doing!" said Prescott, drawing a chair nearer them. "A man unforgiven is a sinner unrepentant; there is danger to his soul!"

"But what did he do?" asked his sister.

"Oh, he says dreadful things, Mary! He is a crazy cat! We were at Mrs. St. John's the other afternoon, and we were talking about women, about Boston women, and he said—what do you think? That he never knew a woman that wouldn't rather be beautiful than good!"

"The wretch!" exclaimed his sister, while Burwell smiled and looked interested.

"Yes, but didn't I add," intervened Prescott, "that the maxim didn't apply either to you or to Mrs. St. John at all? Why, you are both so beautiful that you can almost afford to be saints. Isn't that so, Trench?"

"I always believed saints to be very beautiful; I mean lady saints, of course!" remarked Trench, drawing his cigarette.

"Especially the latter-day saints!" observed Burwell, *sotto voce*, at which they all laughed.

"And what is more, Mrs St. John entirely agreed with me," said Prescott. She said: 'Women's chief happiness is the consciousness of being beautiful, and when they are not they get admirers, in order

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to make themselves believe so.' Though, of course, we all lament the many scandals arising from this state of things, when a little tact and less discretion could make of the same women social saints.—Oh, I say, Trench," he broke off, "I quite forgot! There is one of those social saints outside, in the other room, who'll become a martyr if you don't hurry out to see her. Mrs. Sampson says she's just dying to talk to you, and I promised to bring you out from this charmed circle. And Mrs. St. John is there, too," he added, turning to Burwell, "rehearsing on the Count de Witz some conversation till you go out. May I take Trench with me for a minute or two, Mrs. Drayton?"

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CHAPTER XIII.

SPARRING OF WITS.

It was not very many minutes before Mrs. Drayton called away Miss Prescott to be introduced to somebody in the library who was anxious to meet her, and Burwell rose and stood within the doorway, looking out into the music-room. Burwell felt strange, half oppressed, half restful, as if he had passed through a terribly stormy ordeal which left him with something out of gear in his inmost soul, and with a pensive consciousness that, in spite of everything, something irreparable had been committed; that he was solely the cause of it, but that there was nothing left for him to do but to contemplate the consequences of his actions.

He stood there for a minute or two looking at the brilliant assembly of people, seeing so many familiar faces, listening to so many familiar voices around him, and yet, as if all this were a visionary presentation of some scene he might have dreamed of some time. It was very agreeable, very delightful all around and about him. The boudoir was daintily and picturesquely ornamented; lovely and antique bric-a-brac obtruded here and there, the dark window with the distant shimmering lights outside and the softly toned shades of the lights inside, all con-

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jured up an atmosphere of alluring warmth and soothing sounds, permeated with that delicate, subtle influence characteristic of the atmosphere where many beautiful women are.

But Burwell looked more into the music-room, watching the movements of the people who were occupying his attention, his thoughts making incessant comments on his feelings which were excited by what he saw. Maud had forgiven him;—that is when he called and confessed everything, and professed almost violent contrition. Maud said he must not be silly, and that sort of thing, and she appeared pleasant to him. He did not know what to do or what to say to Harry, but finding that the latter knew nothing, he concocted a story where he figured to a great disadvantage, but which served as a plausible explanation for the apparent quarrel he had had with Maud. But he knew her better; something told him that what had taken place between them, but a couple of days ago, raised an insurmountable barrier to everything that had subsisted between them for the last few years. He felt he would rather not be forgiven than to be treated by Maud with that indifferent pleasantness which she bestowed on most people she came in contact with. He looked into the room, ne watched her movements—she was laughing, talking, smiling, looking this way and that, displaying all those graces and all those charms which were so familiar to him, and which he had

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admired, loved, adored, for the last few years, and which he felt compelled now to contemplate from a distance!

She was talking to Trench now; he had just come near her, and her whole manner had changed. She became at once serious, and now, turning her head toward him, looking up to him so trustingly, so appealingly almost; — 'Gad! how beautiful her eyes are when they gaze that way, he thinks. And as this thought flits across his mind, he thinks with a sense of misgiving, "I wonder whether her eyes have any love left for me now? I'll go up and see."

If there is some indescribable pain in the realization that the woman whom you once held as your own loves now another, there is, after all, an inexplicable pleasure in the subtile consciousness that, do what she may, she can give nothing to the other man which you have not already possessed yourself. In Burwell, the latter feeling was rapidly gaining preponderance over the former and, when he approached Maud, as she was surrounded by Prescott, Burwell, Drayton and another man, and found her looking radiant and happy and brilliantly animated, he almost felt a flickering sense of triumph course through his sensibilities, when he thought that after all she was his—she had been his! Burwell listened and joined in their general conversation, but his thoughts were elsewhere, and his whole mind was

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rapidly waking up from the despondent state into which it had drifted subsequent to the stormy interview. It did not matter to him that Trench stood there near her and that he was engaging all her attention with an interest which she seldom had lavished on him; it did not matter to him that his searching, penetrating glance, when it met hers, for an instant, instead of discovering love there, arrested a diffidence, almost a recoil from him; it did not matter to him that, not far from him, he could see Harry St. John, his friend, her husband, and all that he represented with it; all this was as chaff before the sweeping passion of his agitated feelings which were rapidly rising with a strong, unbending resolution to stand by his rights of possession, and only relinquish them when wrested by her own efforts, not otherwise.

"Why, my dear fellow, you are looking daggers; what's the matter?" Burwell heard Prescott's voice near him all of a sudden. Burwell rested on the other leg, as if that proved it conclusively when he said:

"Oh, that's only one more instance where appearances are deceptive; I feel perfectly angelic, I assure you."

"That accounts for it, I suppose, why you appear and disappear all of a sudden so quickly; you've grown angels' wings!" remarked Mr. Drayton, smoking a cigarette all the time. "We couldn't get him

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to sit five minutes, at a time, at poker last night at the club. We are quite anxious to find out what has become of him lately, Mrs. St. John, unless it is that his paper is losing in circulation."

"Or his blood!" suggested Prescott.

"Or in love!" observed Maud, glancing at Burwell and looking up at Trench with a smile.

"Mrs. St. John is right; she is always right! I am in love; didn't they know it at the club, Drayton?" said Burwell with sudden animation. "I am surprised! Didn't you observe how unlucky I've been lately at the play? Well, I've got the beauty, you fellows have the luck. It has a wonderful effect, love has, on a being when it takes possession of him; isn't that so, Mrs. St. John?

Maud winced a little, but a charming smile illuminated her features, and she said with an arch look:

"Why, you know it is so long since I have been in love that I almost forgot how one feels; how is it, Mr. Trench?"

"I in this, as in all things, I much prefer to learn from my elders in experience," replied Trench, at which they all cried, "A crawl!" until Prescott remarked slyly:

"But Mrs. St. John! Probably it's so long ago that you ought to begin to practice it again in order not to forget how it really feels. 'Tis an uncommonly good thing to experience."

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"Then you can tell us all about it!" interrupted Maud.

"Not at all! I've never had the chance of falling in love with anybody; most of the women who might have tempted me are all married."

"And is this a hindrance?" asked Burwell.

"Heaven forbid! No, not a hindrance! Just the other thing, exactly the opposite! But you can only *get* into love with a married woman not fall in love with her; that's a psychological impossibility.

"Well, that's exactly what prevents me from falling in love again;" interrupted Maud. "A psychological impossibility. Women only love once in their life; it's their greatest and only experience, while men must have a good deal of experience before they can begin to love; isn't that so, Mr. Burwell?"

They all laughed, while Prescott, turning more to Drayton, remarked:

"It's rather strange how Mrs. St. John and I invariably entertain the same opinions on different subjects. What she said of men, I always believed of women."

"You did?" cried Burwell and Drayton simultaneously, while Trench appeared very interested, but was looking more at Maud.

"Yes;" replied Prescott. "I always believed that before they are married, women are all the time rehearsing the play of loving; and after they are

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married, why, at best, they begin then the real acting!"

"Prescott would sacrifice his wits for an epigram!" commented Trench amidst, laughter. "I should only like to know what sad passage in life made him so miserably cynical; confess, Prescott, what made you put on blue glasses?"

"My dear fellow, there are disappointments and disappointments!" replied Prescott. "My disappointment rises from a different source. I see too much virtue in the world, and if I wear blue glasses, it is only to be able to see the purity of the heavens better; there is so much of that kind of thing up there!"

"The miserable creature!" cried Maud. "He means to insinuate gently that there is so little of it down here. Oh, here's Mrs. Drayton; do take Mr. Prescott away from us; he has been saying dreadful things all the evening! What are our young men coming to, Mr. Trench? They are so bewilderingly witty of late that it is hard to understand them."

"They ought to be stopped!" suggested Burwell.

"They really ought!" Maud agreed, "else we'll all be so brilliant soon that we'll be too dazzling to see each other."

"Has the crazy cat been saying more of his shocking things?" interposed Mrs. Drayton, in reference to Prescott.

"No, Mrs. Drayton! 'Pon my word I didn't say

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a thing that doesn't bear repetition; did I, Drayton?" Prescott appealed. "I think it is very unkind of Mrs. St. John to say I say dreadful things. I only said what I meant, and when I praised the married women, all the men will bear me witness that I did not overstate the mark, did I?" he said, appealing to the men present.

"Yes, married women are delicious!" observed Burwell, *sotto voce*, "and if they hadn't those unfortunate appendixes in the shape of husbands they would be perfect!"

"Oh, worse and worse!" cried Mrs. Drayton. "Come, Mr. Trench, let us go away and leave these wickled people to themselves; Miss Speiser is going to play something for us, and I want you to meet her."

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE BREAKING OF THE LAST LINK.

By and by Prescott and Drayton moved off and Maud was left alone with Burwell. The people around were scattered in the large room; they were talking loud and laughing, and the general din of voices drowned every particular conversation which might have been overheard.

Burwell felt conscious; he moved a chair nearer Maud's and sat down, and felt annoyed at the realization that he shouldn't feel natural, in spite of the strain of all his efforts. He looked at her furtively, and though he couldn't detect the least indication of uneasiness in her features, he felt he could not call back the expression which he usually discovered there whenever they found themselves alone. There was a placid radiance enhancing her beautifully suffused face, but her eyes were wandering, and though they didn't rest entirely on Trench, they swept past him again and again, and they kept contracting and expanding, and growing translucently light and softly dark as if mirroring forth the ever changing thoughts and emotions which were flitting over her mind and soul, and which showed Burwell that they did not steadily concentrate on him.

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"That was a charming thing you said about women;" he said, before he realized that he was going to say it. Burwell noticed a shadow flit over her face, but in a moment her features were again unruffled as she replied:

"Oh, you liked it?" She was determined not to give him a chance at love-making.

"Yes; I believed it!" he said with emphasis.

"I am glad you do! It is so pleasant to have something to believe in; I wish I had. I always tell Harry so; though that's more his sentiment than mine!"

Burwell bit his lips, but the next moment he smiled in response to her archly demure look and said:

"Ah, yes; I know what you mean! But you know there is no love without a sacrifice, and in that way–er–" He did not wish to finish his sentence, when she followed it up.

"You mean, in that case, you were the happier of the two, eh?" she asked, a pallor covering her face. "Well, I am glad to have made you so very happy. Only women always sacrifice something when they love. And you, if you believe in what you say, will you promise me one sacrifice?"

"What is it?"

"You know me by this time, don't you? You know how I feel when I speak! Will you promise never to speak to me of love again?"

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Burwell looked up seriously, almost ,yln msloe into her face; tears started into his eyes, and he said lowly:

"I see no love in your eyes, no love for me, Maud! Yes, I promise!"

All her former expression of pleasant, happy brightness came flowing back into her features, as she said, almost in the same tone of familiarity which subsisted between them a few days ago:

"That's good of you, Frank! And we'll be friends, oh, very great friends, won't we?"

"Yes, Maud!"

"I wish I could kiss you for it, darling! Here's Harry!" And Burwell got up and walked across the room to sit by Miss Prescott.

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CHAPTER XV.

PRESCOTT'S COMMENTARIES.

"This is perfectly delightful, Prescott!" Trench was saying a few minutes later, when they were both standing near the boudoir door, looking into the music-room. "I'll grant you in this one instance that you are more advanced than we are. Such a feature of charming Bohemianism as this is enough to compensate for the gigantic dullness which must prevail in Boston society most of the time. Tell me candidly, do you really like that sort of thing?"

"What sort of thing?"

"Oh, you Bostonians are apt to affect to adore everything that's in Boston! Do you mean to say that you really believe in this society, in this exclusive coterie of four hundred, as you like to call it? Will you tell me, please, what the devil you are driving at?"

"I will, if you'll tell me what you are fishing for?"

"Oh, nothing! simply light on the subject! I don't understand it all, that's all! Why, for instance, you should tolerate that Mrs. Sampson over there, and not only tolerate her, but have her at the head of everything?"

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"Oh–ho! I perceive you are smelling a rat! Mrs. Sampson is worth a power of shekels!"

"But a power of shekels is not everything."

"My dear fellow, it's a great deal more!" interrupted Prescott. "In the advanced state of civilization things are measured by the value of their currency. You heard about the old division of money and brains? Well, the brains have made concessions in this country, as you have done in yours. Shall I remind you of the little fact that at the present moment your very Royalty condescends to associate with people from our side, who, if they had not the money, might have been happy to be your Royalty's boot-blacks? Oh, I assure you, America is a great country; Columbus was a great man, and money is the greatest of all things!"

"Yes, but those people, while we associate with them and that kind of thing, we don't make them one of ourselves!"

"Nor do we of Mrs. Sampson herself! We, the genuine blue-bloods of Boston, look with secret misgivings on her. But we've got to tolerate her, because if we didn't she mightn't tolerate us; and, then, we'd get left! Do you want to see genuine Bostonians? Look at that man and that woman, those on the settee to the right!"

"Wonderful!"

"You see that man next to him? That man who looks as if he were made for his clothes? He is just

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going over to bow to Mrs. Sampson; isn't he graceful? He is rehearsing the part of a man of the world. My sister calls him, 'the latest style,' and I always think of him as the earliest edition—he looks so new, you know!"

"Well, who is he?"

"One of us! We have not got many like that, but we prize them as the apple of our eyes. He always has one foot in Boston and the other one in London. He speaks English with an accent which he thinks is strikingly English, but which every Englishman considers as peculiarly American! He is up to the latest dance, is familiar with 'the best form,' and it is secretly whispered that he has got a private cable to London which keeps him continually informed of the latest wrinkle in dress and the latest change of weather, so that he might dress accordingly."

"Why don't you exhibit him?"

"Oh, because he makes an exhibition of himself. Besides, don't you know the great man's saying that men are so necessarily mad it would be madness to attempt to make them differently. Burwell calls them 'The Gentlemen Peripatetics,' because they keep visiting so much, and Mrs. St. John, whose tastes are so strict, you know, says they are only their tailors' advertisements. Still they are harmless, unless, to be sure, they wag their tongues too freely; but most of our ladies like them, which

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makes them think they are having a devilish good time!"

"Poor souls! Here's Mrs. Drayton! Isn't she charming? I think she is one of the loveliest women I've seen in Boston."

"She is all that; a relative, you know, quite natural! She is really great fun, only a little indiscreet; too frank, you know, and that sort of thing. There are few women, unfortunately, who entertain such sound maxims as I heard Mrs. Sampson propound the other day."

"What was it?"

"Oh, Mrs. Sampson and Mrs. St. John were having a dispute about conduct, and Mrs. Sampson remarked that she would rather have half-a-dozen lovers and nobody know it, than only have one and have all the world talk about it!"

"And what did Mrs. St. John say?"

"Eh? Oh, she said it all depended on circumstances, and on the man! Some men are only worth loving, others, suffering for; deuced sound philosophy that is! But Mrs. St. John is famously brilliant."

"Oh, I say! Who is that man talking to her now? Gad, what a voice, and so close too!"

"See Burwell glare at him! That's one of our character! Clyde is his name; a man, as you see, who has been watching the inside of forty for several years at least. He is also one of our favor-

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ites. The ladies dote on him, because he does on them. He is deaf, which gives him the appearance of enjoying their confidence. He is a man of the world after the latest edition. He knows everybody and everybody's business to the tips of their fingers, which he generally keeps on the precarious tip of his tongue. He does nothing in particular himself, consequently he knows what everybody else does, and when he gets tired of talking about others' intrigues, he begins to tell you about those of his own."

"Oh, Willie, don't tell me that I am going to forego the pleasure of his acquaintance! Why, he is going; and who is that man with him? His blood is blue, I can see that; his liver is sadly out of order which shows high living; but where did he cultivate his face?"

"Hush, tell it not in gath! That's a man every one knows. Stewart is his name, and who, but for the Guelphs, might have been on the throne of England to-day. His blood is blue, as you say, and his mind is filled with the importance of that fact. If you ever want a man to tell you all about the pretensions of the Back Bay parvenue get him into a corner and you'll see him weep.—How do, Mr. Stewart?—He has been known to suffer indigestion for a week at a time, if there was any mesalliance, so disturbed was his soul; and he has such a dread of contaminating his own blood that he has resolutely refused to

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enter the blessed state of matrimony for fear of choosing a wife from a family whose genealogy weaves only round the masts of the Mayflower. Here's Mrs. St. John coming up to us!"

"Oh, Mr. Prescott!" she said, approaching them, "will you ask at home, please, whether you could spare Mr. Trench, Tuesday evening? And you would like to come?" she added, turning to Trench. "I would be ever so glad to see you after dinner. I'll show you those things I promised you."

"I am sure we can't spare him, Mrs. St. John," Prescott replied, "and I am sure he'll be charmed to avail himself of your invitation. But the pleasure of making sacrifices for you is so—"

"Don't be silly! Are you practicing a declaration on me?" interrupted Maud. "I suppose he has been filling you with all sorts of ghastly things about the people present?" she asked of Trench. "That is the worst about Mr. Prescott. He likes his analyses of people so much that even his friends have got to suffer by the operation."

"Oh, no!" replied Trench, "you do him an injustice, Mrs. St. John! Prescott's analyses of his friends are invariably flattering, particularly his lady friends!"

"Well, I am glad, Trench, I've found one man who doesn't misunderstand me," said Prescott in mock madness. "But as for flattering one's friends, I only feel that I am flattering myself by praising

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them up to the skies, and to realize, then, that those great people, that those good people, are really my friends after all!"

"He is really incorrigible, isn't he, Harry?" she asked as her husband approached them, and they were taking leave.

"Then I will expect you on Tuesday evening, Mr. Trench?" she added, on parting.

"Yes, thank you! With my host's permission!"

A few minutes later the Prescotts and Trench also went home, but Burwell remained, after promising to dine with Prescott and Trench at the club tomorrow.

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CHAPTER XVI.

TRENCH IS BEGINNING TO REFLECT.

Since his last visit to the St. Johns', since the last afternoon he had spent with Maud, Trench had felt himself living in a strange, expectant atmosphere in which an oppressive element mingled largely with a host of impulses and a crowd of active, pleasurable sensations. He was so taken by surprise by everything that had happened; his thoughts, inclinations, his whole temperament almost had been running in such different directions and had sustained such a violent concussion, that, as yet, he hardly realized what had taken place, what was going to take place, and beyond the strong feeling of an indefinite longing for Maud to the exclusion of everything and everybody else, he entertained no other specific conception of events and consequences.

That he was fascinated by Maud from the moment he met her, he made no secret to himself or to others. For the first couple of days, in fact, he kept telling everybody what a charming woman Mrs. St. John was, and the Prescotts, the young people, entertained themselves hugely at his expense. He was conscious of the subtle, pleasurable influences, influences bordering almost on excitement, which her presence produced on his senses whenever

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they met; he was aware of the strong, almost magnetic attraction which her person had to him whenever he thought of her, or met her, or spoke of her, but he had not been thinking of falling in love with her. Trench was a man with a strong disposition to concrete preconceptions of his own nature, and, while he entertained the possibility of loving a woman while, in fact he thought, he had already met women who would answer to that preconception of his of a personality on whom he might bestow the extent of his affections, he deemed it almost impossible that he would ever be carried away by a feeling which, at the outset, could not command practicable results!

He certainly had not thought himself in love, in spite of the indications of a growing feeling in him, which hitherto had almost been foreign to his nature. And so remote was the possibility, in his mind, of getting entangled in anything further than a passing liking, an agreeable friendship, a delightful flirtation, if you please, that on the very day which revealed to him everything in a different light, he was really contemplating, had almost decided on, a journey back to England.

Since that afternoon, though, Trench felt as if he had entered a new life. Possibilities and probabilities were flitting before him, things retrospective and visions of the prospective were all whirling and mixing in his mind in massive but confused images,

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over which he recognized one predominant feeling that, as things had taken this sudden drift, the future must be directed entirely by Maud.

It was not without the presentiment of a strange misgiving, mixed with a triumphant sensation, that Trench left the Prescotts on that Tuesday evening to walk down to the St. Johns' residence. His vague expectations were not a little accentuated by the contents of a note which he had received that day, and which, on reading it over, he could scarcely restrain himself from kissing. There were only a few lines in it; there was no signature; but he recognized the handwriting at first glance, and he felt a sensation of joy leap up within him when he realized in it the dissipation of all his further doubts about her feelings toward him, and, in a measure, his feelings toward her.

"I'll wait for you soon after eight, dearest," the note ran. "Come early, before he goes out! I am longing to see you and talk to you!"

He walked along with a buoyant, elastic step, thinking all the time more of how the Prescotts looked and what they said before he left, than prefiguring what was awaiting him. A strange tumult of sensations made him shut out from view what he longed most to dwell upon, and he could not help smiling to himself when he remembered how Miss Prescott urged him to tell her what it was Mrs. St. John had promised to show him. Willie

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had teased him so much about it that it was really very amusing, and then when Miss Prescott stood up, so pretty with blushes, her eyes sparkling with brightness and fun and fondness, and said: "You must really tell me, Mr. Trench, all about that mysterious something Mrs. St. John is going to show you; won't you?" And he had promised; he couldn't help it; she was such a dear, sweet, pretty little girl! "How d' do, Mr. Drayton? Yes, it's perfectly lovely to-night; quite spring!" He really had not noticed whether it was spring or summer until he was interrupted in his thoughts by Drayton's greeting.

He looked round now. He was crossing Charles street, and was opposite the Public Gardens. It was moonlight — that soft, serene, shadowy moonlight that has almost the liquid luster irradiating from a star. Fleecy clouds were traversing the heavens, and drifting shadows of fantastic shapes along the street. A breeze as gentle and as soft as if it were nature's own kiss blew on his temples, and stirred up a host of feelings which merged into an indefined longing for happiness. Soon, almost with a sensation of alarm agitating his breast, he ran up the steps and was quickly ushered into Maud's boudoir.

She was not there to receive him, and Trench sat down to wait for her. He heard the servant go up to announce him, and in a moment he returned, saying his mistress would be right down. Trench got

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up and walked into the little ante-room, into which the boudoir opened, and sat down on a settee near the window. It was a pink room, and the shaded lights and charming bric-a-brac, the little figures obtruding here and there, the flowers diffusing a deliciously delicate aroma, the soft tapestry enhancing it all with a restful luxury, made him feel more composed than he had felt in the boudoir.

Trench had not been sitting there very long when he heard somebody come tripping downstairs, and, a moment later, Maud stood before him radiantly lovely in a loose, picturesque dress, her eyes translucent with a furtive eagerness, her hands extended; and when she saw that he had jumped up to meet her, she glanced around, and their lips met in a long, passionate kiss.

"I am so happy you came!" she said. "Harry has got to go to New York by the nine o'clock train, and I wanted you to come before he went, on account of the servants. You got my note to-day, didn't you?"

"It was so sweet of you to write," he said, still holding her hand. "You know I thought it was all a dream, and your note proved that it was a happy reality." And he kissed her hand as they sat down together, and Maud rang the bell and ordered coffee to be brought there.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE CONFESSION.

"But my darling," Trench was pleading a couple of hours afterward, "please don't cry, don't feel so badly! What does it all amount to? Please, darling! Why, it is your past, and it is all gone, and it is not worth a tear of yours!"

They were still in the ante-room. St. John had left soon after he came down. And Maud, as she began to talk to Trench about herself, burst into a flood of tears and cried as if her heart would break from the surcease of some secret sorrow. They were both on the settee and Trench was holding her head on his breast, trying to soothe her, trying to comfort her, kissing her head and her hands and her tears, and repeating, "Please, my darling—please, love, don't cry! I don't want to hear anything if it pains you so much! Please, don't! You needn't tell me anything about your past; what does it concern me? If you will only give me your future, love!"

"Oh, I don't know what I am saying, why I am telling you all this!" she burst out piteously. "I know you couldn't love me if you knew all, if you knew everything! You'll laugh at me, you'll despise me; oh, you couldn't help it!" And again she burst out crying.

"Don't, love, don't say that!" Trench whispered

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to her with eagerness, as if he had been keenly pained. "Why should I care? I love you, and not your past, or faults, or virtues." And he kissed her again and again on her lips and her eyes and her cheeks, trying to draw her nearer and nearer to him.

"I am so miserable, dearest!" she said in a calmer voice, nestling closer to him as her agitation began to subside. "I am so miserable, at times, when I think of things, I imagine my heart will break, and sometimes I wish it would break, or something would happen!"

Trench did not say a word. He held her tight in his arms, and closed his embrace more sympathetically when she was saying the last words. Something was happening to Maud's inward nature. For her tears had ceased flowing, her sobs had completely subsided, and, for a moment, she was silent. Profound stillness reigned in the whole household. "And yet I wanted to be so good; why, I love purity!" she began again. "I meant to be so good! how I begged and cried against it the first time I did wrong! But he knew there was some fatality in my nature and he availed himself of it!"

"My darling, it was not your fault!" Trench said, gently soothing her as he saw that her eyes were rapidly filling again with tears.

"Yes, it was my fault," she said with emphasis, moving a little from him. "What is the good of being a woman, without constancy in love?"

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"But love, in itself, is so redeeming a condition!"

"I wish to heavens it had been love! I would find some consolation in it. But does love only live as long as desire lasts? I should never have gotten married, I know I should not! An astrologer told me once that I should never be happy if I married; that was when I was a young girl. I laughed at it then, and it has all come true. Oh, yes, everything!" And she sat up with her hands clasped, evidently absorbed in following some vision.

"You should not believe in such nonsense!" Trench said after a pause. "The stars are too high to govern our destinies, and the planets are only favorable to those who live by them. Believe in yourself, love, and fate may go whistling."

"Ah, that's just it! I can't believe in myself any longer!" she said sadly. "For the last six years I have led such a strange life, I have had so much to live through, so much crowded into my existence, that I almost dread to stop and think of things! and yet, in spite of all this, I sometimes throw everything to the wind, and think all the world is the same, and give up even the thought of living differently."

She was silent again for a moment, and Trench took hold of her hands and drew her nearer him.

"And yet it wasn't so much my fault, after all!" she resumed. "When I married Harry, I don't suppose I was in love with him, only he answered all my requirements, and I acquiesced in loving him, or

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rather letting him love me. I had seen some of the world, I had heard a great deal about how people lived, but I knew nothing of the private life of men and women. And, then, soon after I was married, he told me so many things about himself and others; they were so dreadful to me, then! Oh, what a night I spent! I cried so bitterly, I felt so badly, I thought the whole world had suddenly been revealed to me to be a delusion, and that there was nothing but barrenness around me."

"Poor darling!"

"And, then, I was not happy! I did not cease to love Harry, but I soon found out I was indifferent to him, while he was so good, so thoughtful, so tender to me! Oh, I can't tell you how I lived afterward!" she said, burying her head in her hands. There was a heavy silence for a minute or two.

"And, then, I thought I loved another;" she began in a muffled tone. "I had met him when I was first engaged to Harry, and then I met him again when we were married. I had not thought of him all the while, I had not loved him till he spoke to me first of it. He was very much older than myself, and his talk, his pleading, his passion at first agitated me, then persuaded me, till he prevailed. Heaven knows how I struggled! But it was not a struggle for goodness! He asked of me my friendship first, I gave him that! And, then,

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one night he begged of me a kiss, and—and I gave myself all to him!"

And Maud pressed her face against his breast while he kissed her head repeatedly, saying:

"But, my darling, this wasn't your fault!"

"But this is not all!" she resumed with a sob. "There was another, and I thought I loved him and gave up the first one! It nearly broke my heart to pain him, but I could not pretend. Oh, please don't go away from me, don't push me away!" she exclaimed piteously, as she felt Trench instinctively draw back a little and relax his embrace.

"No, darling!" he said, kissing her. "I am not going to leave you! I am not drawing back from you! And, all this while, you remained a wife to your husband?" he asked gently.

"Yes; and Harry was so good and so kind to me all the time. Oh I wish he weren't!" she exclaimed passionately. "What a life I led all the time! I hated solitude, I hated to think of anything, to remember anything. I travelled, went out a great deal, entertained, laughed, joked, and all in order to forget myself! And yet, it wasn't conscience that I was anxious to silence! For I never hated my actions, I only hated myself, at times; and when I met him and was with him I forgot all the world and thought myself the happiest woman in existence!"

"You must have loved him, darling!" he said thoughtfully.

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"I don't know! I thought I did, I understood I did. I didn't know what was happening to me! Why, dearest," she said, suddenly sitting up, "I used to sit sometimes, at night, in the dark, thinking, thinking, thinking, what would become of me if the world knew all about me, and yet not risking to go away with him for fear of a scandal, for the sake of my children! How I hated myself, how I hated everything then, and yet I always thought there was a future before me when I could repair things; oh, if I only could! But here I am loving you, and I couldn't, oh, I couldn't help it!" and again she burst into a flood of tears, while Trench clasped her in his arms and kept soothing and quieting her.

"Do you love me the same way that you loved them, that you loved those men?" he asked gently, looking into her tearful eyes. She threw her arms around him and kissed him passionately.

"No, my dearest! I love you so differently, I love you so much! I would rather die than give you the smallest pain and disappointment! You see I couldn't deceive you; I had to tell you everything! Oh, it's such a different love; it seems as if my best nature loved you, while the wicked part of me is afraid of you!"

And again their lips joined in a long and passionate kiss.

"And so you don't reject me, you don't despise

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me, you forgive me everything of my whole dreadful, wicked past?"

"My darling, I have no right to forgive you! The past is your own, and you owe nothing to me! And, then, what have you done that is so wicked, darling? If I told you all I had done in my life, you would probably think me a monster! Why should a man think wrong in a woman what he considers right in himself? We haven't even the excuse of loving. Men are wicked because they are stupid. Please, love, don't be annoyed. Don't think of it! Love me, kiss me!"....

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CHAPTER XVIII.

TRENCH IN SOLITUDE.

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning when Trench reached his rooms. He walked slowly all the way home, scarcely realizing where he was, what he was doing, so mechanical were his actions. The moon shone bright and serene; the heavens were flecklessly blue; the air was warm and still; but he noticed nothing; there was a stupor on his soul, a darkness on his mind.

He walked upstairs to his bedroom, closed the door behind him, and sat down on a chair beside the bed. Opposite him was a long mirror reflecting coldly his own image which he regarded dispassionately, strangely, as if he, himself, were far away from that person over there! And yet, he was not conscious of any thought or any emotion that was particularly agitating him. On the contrary, he was faintly conscious of a lethargic, heavy sensation, almost a stupor, in which his whole being was merged. He did not reflect any particular image at that moment, but he felt that something massively and entanglingly oppressive was clouding his imagination and closing on his senses, and he yielded to it, he almost invited the morbid, moping something that had taken hold of all his senses.

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He sat there, still and motionless, for a long time, his head drooping, his hands stuck deep into his pockets, all the events of his life, all the incidents which befell him since his arrival in Boston slowly and incongruously moving before him and blending into the life and events which had been revealed to him that evening.

"Good God!" he thought. "Such a beautiful, such a pure looking woman to have been so soiled!" But the thought came on him with the force of a sudden pain, and he looked round quickly, as if afraid that he had said something which nobody should have overheard. It was still, painfully still in the whole house; everybody was asleep, nobody was moving

"No, not soiled!" he said to himself almost piteously. "Did she not love those men? At least, she thought she loved them! And yet, she said herself that a woman is nothing without constancy in love! What did she do different from what I have done in the world? If I felt as she did, I would consider myself now the most defiled of human beings. Men have no thought, no feeling, even no impulse beyond that which they consciously excite in themselves, in marring themselves and their inmost natures. And yet they demand a purity of woman which they never think of preserving for her, themselves! And how she has suffered for all that!" he thought a few minutes later, conscious all the while

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that, notwithstanding what his mind was saying, his heart was possessed by a different feeling.

"No!" he kept on thinking; "It was not her fault! If she blames herself, it is only because her nature is so genuine and so free from falsehood! Who were the men she loved? What brutes they were, to have taken advantage of her innocence and goodness! They went and spoiled a life that might have been so beautiful, so brilliant! Did he not say he did not mind what her past was? He loved her; oh! how he thought he loved her! And what a wealth of love, he thought, she had in her nature! How tender, how passionate, how clinging her love was!

He sat there and, as those reflections flitted across his mind his imagination conjured up a host of images, which he tried to keep away from him. But they still forced themselves on him and, while his memory still retained the pleasurable sensation of her kisses, of her embraces, his mind kept wandering over scenes with which his reason kept mocking him, tormenting him,—they were realizations that she must have expended the same affections on those others, on those other men!

The same thought had crossed his mind when she was telling him, and he had unconsciously shrunk from her; he felt almost a revulsion of feeling at that moment, but as soon as he realized it, he checked it with a flood of compassion, and an indescribable, exquisite sense of pity, succeeded the

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slight reaction. Now, it was not that. It was more of a disagreeable sensation that agitated him. He felt that he was consciously struggling with it, and by and by he exclaimed to himself: "Bah! I am not jealous! Jealous of her past? As well might I be jealous of her husband at present! Great heavens! And she was deceiving him all the time? Was she pretending to love him all the while?" He felt a sickening sensation compress his heart at the realization of it. He clenched his teeth and his fists, and he sat there with a sensation of strenuous determination to shut out such reflection from his mind. He must not punish her even in thought; she had suffered enough! She had suffered so much!

And how well it was that she had not acted on a rash impulse, and left her husband when she first thought that she loved some one else! Suppose she had, and discovered afterward that it was a mere infatuation,—a mere sally of a passionate disposition that found no satisfaction in a nature destitute of all those pristine virtues which alone can give poetic charm to conjugal life, and without which it remains shallow, barren, and fruitlessly incomplete! Good God! and her children? Her life would have been a mere wreck now! 'Tis inconsiderate impulses that wreck most lives, especially when the inconsiderateness is to one's own nature! What was to be done now? How was he to act?

Trench did not analyze carefully his own motives

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when that question flashed across his mind. One thing he had resolved on firmly: — he must not be the cause of one of her self-reproaching moments hereafter; and that he must not be her lover before he could claim her as his wife. He sat there, thinking it all over. He saw the faces of consternation on most of his friends and acquaintances when the fact transpired that he had taken away Maud with him. He thought of the Prescotts, of Burwell, and St. John. He thought it would be a grievous wrong to commit on his host,—while her husband? He reflected that all this must cause an uproarous scandal, that it might be dishonorable, that his actions might be even interpreted as traitorous!

He realized it all; he depicted it all to himself; he dwelt on those images which his fancy had conjured up, but they had no force before him; they attenuated and dwindled into nothingness as rapidly almost as they rose to his view. Good God! he said to himself with a tinge of indignation in his thought. "Are lives to be lost? Are falsehoods to be allowed? Is wickedness, is death to be permitted as a substitute for genuine feeling, for love, for life, simply because a few babbling old women believe in smooth surfaces, and prefer rotten bottoms to ruffled appearances? Conventional forms of society and morality be damned! It is only hypocrites that can live under them without choking! Maud must not be a victim to it any longer, nor he either!

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Trench rose from his chair with a start as the last thought coursed across his mind. He seemed to be permeated with new energy; his old self returned to him suddenly. He looked round, and, as he saw his face reflected in the mirror, he gave a long whistle—so solemn and pale was the cast of his features. He had been sitting and thinking for over three hours! The lights in the room were already getting pale before the dawn of the morning. He looked out through the window and saw a transparent golden light stealing up the distant horizon. The sun had already risen before he hastened to get into bed; and he was soon asleep, now that his mind was calmed with a resolution!

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CHAPTER XIX.

TRENCH MAKES A PROPOSAL AND WISHES ON A RING.

Late, the following afternoon, Trench was sitting in Maud's boudoir waiting for her to come down. The servant said she was dressing and that she would be down in a few minutes, and Trench was sitting listlessly, turning over the leaves of a book, his hearing strained to hear her footsteps. It was still everywhere. The windows were open; the slanting rays of the sun kindled rich colors on the walls and reflected in dazzling prisms on some of the bric-a-brac and the mirrors in the room. A deep crimson light lay resting in the middle of the velvet carpet and appeared to emphasize the silence and permeate it with an inviting, peaceful atmosphere.

Trench felt that he was getting somewhat restless, somewhat nervous while he was waiting. He was slightly disappointed, he owned to himself, to find that she was not there awaiting him, or that she had not come down immediately he was announced. He pictured to himself the image of how ardently they would embrace each other when he came into the room,—and, now she was not there to receive him! He had thought so much about her, he had had so much to overcome mentally, even emotionally, be-

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fore he resolved upon saying to her what he was going to say, and now she was not there—she was not even hastening down to hear it! Evidently she was treating all this as an ordinary, every-day life sort of an event, while he was regarding it as the most important, the most serious affair of his lifetime.

But he had not time to let his feeling of discontent get the mastery over him, for he heard some doors open suddenly and, a moment later, Maud burst into the room, ran over to him and, throwing her arms around him, kissed him repeatedly and fervently.

"You see;" she said, looking all radiant and happy, though somewhat pale, "you see I came down in my wrapper, I thought it would be too long to wait and dress. I wanted to see you so much. How are you, darling?" she asked, holding his hand and making him sit down by her side.

"I am well, but you are pale; what is the matter, dearest?" he asked, solicitously drawing her nearer to himself.

"Am I?" she asked archly and looking surprised, while her eyes were gazing mischievously loving into his. "I don't know why I should be!" she added with a smile.

"You have not worried?"

"No, darling; but I was awake a long time last night; I could not sleep with happiness. I was so sure you loved me when you went away, and I was so

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afraid you wouldn't when you knew all." She said all this in such a gentle, soft voice, the tenderness of which had almost the ring of a child-like innocent frankness that Trench was stirred to his inmost depths by it, and he drew her still nearer to him and kissed her impulsively and passionately.

"But you look thin and worn yourself!" she said lying in his arms, looking up into his face, with her hands clasped round his neck. "You have not worried, love? you have not suffered, darling,—you love me, don't you? Oh, I wish we could have met before all those dreadful things happened to me, before I was married; we would have been so happy, wouldn't we?"

"We can be yet, dearest!"

"I am afraid not!" she said with a loud sigh. "You could never feel the same to me as you would have if I had always been yours. You will think of those other things in my life. Oh, I am so miserable when I think of them myself!" And she clung closer to him, as if she were anxious to shut out the misery with which the memories of her past were rapidly assailing her.

"Please, darling, don't worry, don't be annoyed over it!" Trench said, smoothing her hair and drawing up her face to his lips to kiss her. "You promised me last night you would never refer to it, and I promised you I would never think of it. I will try to keep my promise if you keep yours, and I

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know, darling, that I can love you as if nothing had ever happened, as if there were nothing which you need regret in your past."

"You are so good, darling!" she said impulsively.

"Listen, dearest! I have thought it all over. I sat up all night, almost, thinking it all over, analyzing everything, and I am sure I am not deceiving you or myself either. I know how I feel to you; I know that I love you, and, though, if I could give my life in order to wipe out your past, I would willingly do it; still I know that I love you, that it is not a mere infatuation, darling. I know only of one way to save you from further temptation; I only know of one way in which my love can serve you; you must go away with me!"

Maud gave a slight start; she did not reply.

"I do not know of any other issue to all this;" he continued, still holding her in his arms. "I wish things were different, but there is no use wishing, and I don't know of anything else to do. We must go away, and at once, too, darling!"

Maud freed herself from his arms and sat up. She looked pensive, her head was drooping, her hands lay limp on her lap, all the animation of her face vanished of a sudden; she sat so for a few seconds while Trench regarded her eagerly.

"I wish I could, oh, I wish I could!" she exclaimed suddenly in a whisper, resembling more a sigh.

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"I know, love, the sacrifice all this would entail on you;" Trench said gently, bending toward her and taking her hand in his. "I have thought it all over. I know all the talk and the ordeal of the scandal you would have to face. I have weighed it all; but I think we owe more to the truth of our own natures than to the superficial demands of society, and I do not know what else there is to be done, if your love is as sincere as mine is for you!"

"I would be so happy if I could, darling!" she said, suddenly rousing herself from an abstraction in which she was apparently merged and looking appealingly into his face. "I thought about it this very day, and I would give anything to be able to go away with you somewhere outside of all this beastly world—somewhere in the East—and live there, and forget everything in the happiness you would have in store for me! But I couldn't, darling; I couldn't leave Harry and face all the world, and hurt all my family; I could not! Please, darling, don't be angry with me, and disappointed; I would love so much to go away with you!" she said, as she noticed a cloud pass over Trench's face. He sat silent for a moment, his eyebrows knit, his face reflecting an evident inward struggle.

"Then I must go away myself, without you!" he said, slowly.

"Oh, no, no, no—no, darling! You won't go away and leave me alone?" she exclaimed, im-

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pulsively, throwing her arms round his neck. "I love you so much, darling, and I wish I could go away. I wish I had courage enough to face everything; you know it would make me the happiest woman in the world. Oh, how I love you!" And their lips joined in a long, long kiss, and when she broke away, she said: "And then, my darling, I have got those children; I couldn't leave them! You wouldn't want me to leave them; would you?"

Trench did not reply for a second; he kept stroking her hair and looking at her, and then said:

"Oh, I don't know what I would or wouldn't have you do. I think you ought not to stay here, darling; that is, if you love me as you say you do!"

"Please don't talk like that; you know I love you! But think of all the trouble, and scandal, and pain we would cause to so many! You and I would be ruined for life. And, then, Harry has been so good, so kind, so trusting to me all the time. I wish to heaven he were different, and I wish he loved somebody and were like other men!"

"But, my darling, if you stay here you will have to lead such a false life; you will have to pretend so much! You say you have suffered so much in the past; but your sufferings will only commence, now that you really love some one."

"Not if you stay by me, and love me, and help me—and love me, oh, so much!" and she kissed him fervently again and again.

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"And yourself—and your husband—and his rights, darling?"

Maud jumped up as if pierced by something.

"His rights! My husband's? What do you mean?" she asked, her eyes flashing indignation, her whole face suddenly transformed with passionate anger. "I have no one that has any rights over me but those which I give them! Harry is my husband, but he is not my master! If you don't believe me, there's his wedding ring, there's his engagement ring! And I wish I could fling the whole of my past away with them!" she exclaimed, pulling her rings off her fingers and throwing them violently on the floor.

Trench jumped up and stood by her side, and tried to hold her hands.

"Calm yourself; please calm yourself, darling!" he pleaded. "Please forgive me; I am so sorry I said anything to hurt your feelings or excite you! Please, darling, forgive me and kiss me, and forget what I said; won't you? Come and sit down by me, and we'll talk it all over quietly; and, darling! please—please don't cry!"

"Oh, but you'll always think me more wicked than I am!" she said in a tearful voice. "I know you will, and I have not been wicked—I did not know I was wicked—and I love you so much, oh, so much!"

Gradually her sobbing began to abate and she

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became more responsive to him. "I will think it all over!" she said, "and if I can, darling, I will go away with you—I will go to the end of the earth with you! And, you know? I have got a fascinating idea!"

"What is it, darling?"

"I will never put those rings again on my fingers."

"You must, love, if you stay here! Otherwise people will notice and ask questions."

"Well, I'll wear then my wedding ring alone; but, my darling, if you'll put a ring on me, I will wear it, and you'll wish it on—won't you?"

Trench took a little ring off his finger; it was tiny and pretty, and wished it on her hand, and kissed her finger when he put the ring on it.

"What did you wish?" she asked with a lovely smile on her face.

"Your happiness!"

"Our joint happiness?"

"Your happiness would be mine, too."

"Then you will always have to love me, if you always want me to be happy."

Before he could respond there was a knock at the door, and a moment later little Nina ran in to bid mamma good-night. Trench rose to leave, since Maud was going out to dine and was going to the theater afterward, where he promised to meet her, if the Prescotts could be induced to go.

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CHAPTER XX.

BURWELL'S UNEXPECTED CALL.

It was not many minutes after Trench left that Burwell was announced to Mrs. St. John. She could not imagine what he called for at this time and, for a moment, she experienced a sensation of misgiving. Her mind had been so entirely absorbed in Trench and in all that was happening now, that Burwell had almost dwindled from her memory. She seemed to feel it disagreeable to be suddenly reminded of his existence, of his presence, especially after what had just taken place between her and Trench which made her feel so much nearer to him—him, so much dearer to her! She sent down word that she was dressing to go out, that she would be down very soon, but she did not hasten to complete her toilet. On the contrary, she lingered over some things, dallied with others, and Amie, her maid, was wondering what it was that had so suddenly displeased madame. Usually, Burwell's presence in the house worked such a different effect on her mistress—she seldom stopped to finish dressing, and now she appeared discontented! And Amie kept wondering without allowing her surmises to take a more definite form than the mere belief that there was something wrong going on, probably, a slight falling out:—

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such things do happen in the best regulated relations, thought Amie. She watched her mistress and, as she assisted her in dressing, she suddenly suggested to madame to use a little powder round her eyes. Maud glanced at herself in the looking-glass. There were traces of tears round her eyelids, which she thought she could better hide by using a handkerchief dipped in cologne. "Goodness, he must not see that!" she thought while she let her maid smooth her cheeks with the scent, looking, all the while, in the mirror, to see whether the traces were really disappearing, when suddenly Amie's quiet voice said, "Madame, you have forgotten your rings."

"No; oh, yes! I've got them all right; thank you, Amie! Where did Patrick say he showed Mr. Burwell in?"

"In your boudoir, madame."

Maud frowned and seemed evidently thinking of something, but she let herself be dressed without saying anything more than giving monosyllabic orders; she was impatient now to run down stairs and see what Burwell wanted of her.

Burwell, meantime, was in the ante-room of the boudoir sitting and waiting. A host of strange feelings were agitating him, a crowd of thoughts and reminiscences were flitting across his mind as he sat there, oppressed with the thought of the past and its contrast with the present. He was wondering

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how she would receive him; he had not called there since that afternoon, and had not seen Maud alone. He thought, at first, of keeping away from the house altogether, but something kept gnawing and disturbing him all the time; he kept waiting, anticipating a note from her asking him to come to see her, but the note had not come and the hours and days were beginning to pass, and span a greater distance between them.

The fact of the matter was, Burwell did not easily yield, in his heart of hearts, to the thought that everything was going to end so abruptly between them; he had not realized that everything was already at an end! He felt uneasy, uncomfortable, fearing, at times, to let his mind realize the worst and, at other times, sitting down, and, as if it were, inviting misery; why not? Had she not given up Harry without a sigh—had she not abandoned the other one for him without a struggle? he had asked himself again and again with a groan. And yet, she must have loved him, he thought, the next moment, conscious of an oppressively heavy sensation opposing the effort of comforting reminiscences. She must have loved him, for she trusted him so much; she was so happy with him so many times, and there were moments, he remembered, when she forgot the whole world and would have given everything for their mutual happiness! Oh no! Happiness could not be simulated, and pleasure

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is too superficial not to betray its origin and nature. Oh, no! she really had been happy with him, she really must have loved him! And the treasured memories of love, the relation which happiness has once knit together cannot be so easily effaced and so lightly put asunder by the mere impulse of the moment, or the fanciful caprice of the day!

As he sat there looking out on the river, watching the glorious fantastic changes of the clouds which were dissolving themselves in a resplendent blaze on the smoking horizon, listening, all the while, for her approaching footsteps, he felt that her delay in coming down was rapidly creating a disagreeable presentiment in his breast, that he was getting impatient, that he was beginning to regret having called there at all! He should not have called until he was invited! Though he had reasoned himself into calling by a series of specious arguments and promptings. Wasn't it all an excuse? he thought. At least, she will think so, he assured himself, making a movement as if to leave the room.

But suddenly he was arrested to the place; something had glittered near him. He bent over and picked up a ring; it was Maud's ring! He recognized it at once from the curious way the stones were set. He looked about him more carefully, and, on the table, near him lay her wedding ring. He looked at both the rings with an oppressive, almost a sickening sensation at his heart. He

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could not think of anything definitely, but his vague surmises excited an apprehension that Maud had had some stormy scene with some one, and if not he, then Trench must have been mixed up in it! What could it all mean? Was she going to go away with him? Had she quarreled with Harry? Good and merciful heavens! He felt a heat and cold creep over him as the possibility flashed across his mind. It was terrible how rapidly suspicions worked on his whole nature. He sat there aghast at the realization of what was going to happen, and he at once resolved to see what could be done and, if anything so dreadful was going to take place, he was determined to prevent it.

What was to be done? To confront her with all this, to pretend that he knew everything about it, to extort a confession from her, to wire to Harry? What was to be done? That chump was over in New York, and Trench was here, and once Maud was resolved upon doing anything of that sort, he knew, his appeals or threats would not stop her. But something must be done, something should be done at once; she owed something to him, he must not resign the rights which their relations had given him, and he was not going to sit by meekly and see the most dreadful things happen to Maud! God! what a fool he was to have given in so much! It was all Prescott's fault. Why the devil did he introduce that damn Englishman to her? He knew, he

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felt it that very evening, at the ball, that some calamity was going to overtake everybody from the way Maud received him and acted! God! how beautiful she is! How he loved her! How he loved her, now that she was no longer his!....

"I am so glad you dropped in, Frank," a voice said suddenly near him, "only I am so sorry I have got to go out in a few minutes. I have ordered the carriage for half past six; I am going to dine with the Draytons."

Burwell looked up. Before him stood Maud radiantly lovely in a dress of most delicate blue. Her beauty was thrown in such exquisite relief, there was such a pride animating her placidly cast features, that Burwell looked for a moment as if on an alluring vision. She was not looking at him. She stood, her cloak hanging loosely from her shoulders and adding additional statuesque grace to her imposing figure, her eylashes drooping and accentuating the lovely transparency of her complexion; and she was apparently absorbed in buttoning her gloves.

"Aren't you going?" she asked without looking up.

"N—no!" stammered out Burwell, recovering presence of mind and feeling somewhat foolish for allowing his jealous apprehensions to run away with him. So she was not going away? And he was still standing in a tragic attitude, holding the rings in one

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of his hands and looking as if he were going to declaim something. He felt foolish; he knew she would regard him in that light and would wonder what was up now?

"No?" she asked, looking up at him. "I thought you were asked." She noticed the rings in his hand, but pretended to be otherwise occupied.

"Yes, but I had accepted an invitation to dine with the Prescotts, and I couldn't very well get out of it, you know!"

"But you are not dressed!"

"No! Prescott suggested not to, we might go to the theater afterward.

"So are we! What theater are you going to?

"I don't know!"

"Come all to the "Boston," that's where we are going to-night.—Did you see my rings anywhere? I left them here before I went upstairs; Nina took them off my fingers and, botheration! I quite forgot them, and I have to take off my glove again. Where on earth have they gone to?"

"Oh, I have them here. I found one on the floor and one on the table," said Burwell, looking at her scrutinizingly as he handed her the rings.

"Thanks! Do you want to put them on me?"

Burwell gave an incredulous glance at her and, almost with bated breath, took hold of her ungloved hand. Goodness! he could have clung to her with his lips and poured out a million kisses on her; but

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suddenly he noticed the little ring on her finger and he felt as if something had been run through him. He did not raise his head, though, he did not evince the smallest sign; he thought he must keep the discovery to himself, he smiled even as he bent putting on the rings.

But Maud whose faculties were sensitively on the alert noticed his start, noticed his discovery. She had quite forgotten about the ring Trench had put on her finger, and she felt a wave of mortification flash over her for being so careless. Her cheeks flushed, and without waiting for Burwell to finish putting on the rings, she turned away, ran out of the room saying, "I quite forgot to see baby and leave some instruction with the nurse. I'll be down in a minute."

Burwell had not many minutes to reflect in solitude, but he thought with a sensation of hopeless despair, that it was no use; it was all over! He knew what that ring meant! He had put a ring on her finger the day she had given herself to him, and she had worn it till the afternoon she had the quarrel with him. She had taken it off, and said she would never put it on again, and he knew how unbending Maud could be in her resolves. And still, and yet? There was the baby upstairs, but here she was coming back!

"Baby is not at all well!" she said, coming in; "I don't know what the matter is. I had the doctor

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to-day, but he didn't say much. I don't believe they know much more than to look wise and that sort of thing. Here, don't you want to button my glove for me?"

He saw her put on the glove, he glanced at the finger to discover the ring, but it had gone! Maud divined his glance, and though she felt satisfied with her acting, she was rapidly getting displeased with the role she was playing.

"I'll let you down at the Prescott's if you want to drive with me," she said, when he finished buttoning her glove.

"Thanks, awfully! if you will, please," he said, taking up his hat and accompanying her to the carriage.

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CHAPTER XXI.

MAUD WITH HER OWN THOUGHTS.

That night when Maud came home she found a note from her husband, which, on reading over, she crumpled and threw into the waste-basket, with an ejaculation essentially masculine, but which, when uttered by feminine lips, assumes a piquancy that is more attractive than its merely intrinsic forcibleness. There was nothing in that note but an indication of fair health and good spirits on his part, a tender solicitousness for her welfare, and an intimation that he would run over to dinner to-morrow. Of his business he seldom spoke or wrote to her, and she still more rarely inquired after it. But Maud was discontented, nervous, almost hysterically excited, and this note acted as an irritant on her already over-wrought sensibilities.

She hastened upstairs, closed the door of her room and, dropping her cloak to the ground, she hastened to pull off all her ornaments and began rapidly to unfasten her dress. When her maid knocked at the door she told her she did not want her, she would undress herself; she wanted to be alone.

She wanted to be undisturbed and resign herself to the flow of thoughts which oppressed her. Her

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temperament was not one of those which easily yields to morbid contemplations or feelings, but, this time, her whole being seemed possessed with a strange, restless dissatisfaction. She felt heated, and in throwing off her waist she looked at herself in the mirror—at all the voluptuous wealth of her form and the beautiful poise of her lovely white arms and neck. She felt oppressively dissatisfied with herself and her actions. She hated to think that she was in the least afraid of Burwell; that she had to play a part before him; that, actually, she had taken off *his* ring for fear of Burwell detecting it! She felt indignant, almost ashamed of her conduct when she reflected on it, a minute later; and when she saw Trench at the theater, his calm, self-possessed bearing, his conscious pride when he looked at her and smiled at her, her cheeks flushed with anger at the thought that she could have ever betrayed herself into such action!

Where was that ring now? She picked it up from her dressing-table, where she had left it, and, kissing it repeatedly, she slowly put it on her finger again, saying to herself: "His happiness, our happiness!"

Ah me! how miserable she was, she thought to herself. Here she was, one of the richest, one of the handsomest women in Boston, afraid to take her own life in her hands and select her true happiness! What a fool she was to have gotten married so early! And, then, to have entangled

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herself with that Burwell! The other was so entirely different. How he had suffered, and pled, and begged of her! But when she told him that she did not love him any longer—that it would be mere mockery to pretend to act differently—how devoted he remained in his unhappiness; how faithfully attached he remained in all his actions and demeanor toward her!

Great heavens! What was she to do now? She hated to pretend or to affect anything. And yet, here were Harry's rings on her fingers, and there was Burwell who, somehow or other, inspired her with a timidity, a hesitancy, that was becoming fairly intolerable.

Maud sat down on her bed and, locking her hands over her neck, she sat there thinking, thinking, as if there were no end to her thoughts. What was she going to do? Should she go away? Yes, and leave everybody and everything, and leave people to talk their whole lifetime; and who knows but that Burwell might raise ructions over the child? She didn't know what he wouldn't do if he were driven to it, and the present, apparently, is leading him to absolute despair. Oh, why can't people be frank about what is most paramount to their natures, to their lives, to their whole beings? Why could she not stand up and face the whole world, and say: "This is my choice, and this is my happiness; everything and everybody else is a mere snare and delusion!"

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She was so miserable, and did not know why! What would she not give to have her whole past effaced—every trace of it—so that she could stand up by his side and give herself all to him in purity and goodness before the whole world! Ah, what a past! He could not help despising her at times; she would if she were a man and knew a woman who had loved so much, who had given already her all to other men before!

But what was the use? What was the use? She could not be born over again; she could not erase her past from her own memory; and, great God! if everything were known!

Maud shuddered at the thought. It was almost for the first time in her life that she realized how much and how many people depended on her conduct. Why had she not stopped to think of it all before, when there was time, when there was an opportunity to act and live differently? Now everything was past and gone, and she could not free herself from the intricacies into which her whole moral and mental nature had blundered. She wished everybody were dead—Burwell, and the baby, and everybody; she did not care! She wished she were dead herself; what was the use of living like this? Oh, if he would only love her always—really and truly love her, as he said he did—she would be so faithful, so single-hearted, so devoted to him—to his ideas! Oh, she would try so much to

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mend her past and be a different, a better woman!

"But what is the use; what is the use?" she said to herself, tears starting up to her eyes, and a heavy, helpless sensation oppressing her heart. Merciful heaven! how she suffered! "Is there no use in repenting, and being sorry, and regretting one's actions and one's past?" she asked herself, with a choking sensation in her throat and her breast. Everything round her was black, and gloomy, and helpless. "Oh, my God, my God!" she cried, inwardly, "it is so cruel—so cruel!"

But her thougl.ts were too confused, too oppressive to express themselves definitely any further. Involuntarily, yielding only to a strong impulse, she knelt down by the side of her bed and, burying her head in her hands she gave vent to a passionate outburst of tears. It seemed, as if all that lay on her breast and had accumulated on her soul was bursting through a long pent up sensation, and was finding relief in sobs, and tears, and a tempest of struggling emotions. She lay there crying and sobbing convulsively, her mind all in a confusion, seeing but vague images of the people she thought about so distinctly a moment ago, till gradually and slowly her feelings and thoughts dwindled into nothingness.

Her tears subsided, her sobs abated; there was nothing but a hollow blankness left in her heart and imagination, but when she rose from her kneeling

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position and looked round, she felt so much lighter, she felt so much better, she felt as if a sudden strength had permeated her whole nature. She knew what she would do in the future; she thought to herself, if only he would love her, she could do so much, if only he would love her as he said he did!

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRESCOTTS AT DINNER.

A couple of days after, people began to prepare themselves for the "out of town" party. Only twenty had been invited, and the affair was so carefully organized that it promised to prove a charming success. The day previous, Trench had offered himself as an escort to Miss Prescott who told him, with a smiling eye, that she would have been delighted to have him, but that she had already accepted Mr. Burwell. "O, those Americans are always before us in everything," he said quietly, while they were at dinner. "We Englishmen are evidently too slow to be a success in this country!"

"Trench thinks us too fast, Mary!" remarked her brother, who was seemingly absorbed in peeling an orange.

"I dont' know about that!" replied Miss Prescott glancing at Trench inquisitively. "There are some things in which slowness is more to the point than fastness."

"Really? You think so?" asked Trench.

"Yes, in love!" remarked Prescott, looking steadily at the outlines of the orange. His sister smiled at him and Mrs. Prescott looked amused.

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"You can't be to quick about it when you are in love, my dears!" remarked Mrs. Prescott.

"Yes, and mother speaks from salutary experience. She married father after a fortnight's acquaintance." He was cutting his orange then.

"I don't agree with you. There is such a thing as being too previous in love, too!" remarked Miss Prescott. "You know the old saying: 'Quick won, soon lost?' I would beware!"

Trench glanced at them with a suspicion in his mind that brother and sister were talking about him, but he only remarked, "Oh, I don't know! I think if I were in love I would never hesitate. Why should we? People must be insufferable dunces if they can't console themselves with the realization of past happiness."

"Well, there is something in that!—Pass me the sugar, please.—At least," Prescott was observing, "there is as much in it as for those who derive comfort from hopes of the future."

"Oh, well, Willie, you are an old cynic, you know you are!" was the reward he got from his sister.

"If I am a cynic, Mary, it is because the world is such an infernal fool. Do you think, Trench, Burwell is very happy to contemplate that you have cut him out with Mrs. St. John? I know, I should consider it inexpressible bliss to realize that the girl who loves now another fellow once loved me so dearly!"

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"Was it Burwell, Mrs. St. John was in love with?" asked Trench, with such naivette that they all burst out laughing.

"Why, Mr. Trench, Mrs. St. John is a married woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Prescott.

"Oh, yes, I forgot! I beg-er-pardon! But she is so handsome! and you know, for the life of me, I can never bring myself to regard very handsome women as finally married! Can you?"

"Why, Mr. Trench!" exclaimed both the ladies while Prescott regarded him quizzically and said:

"Oh yes, Trench! I understand what you mean, perfectly understand it! Only I was never able to find the exact expression for my sentiments!"

"Aren't men dreadful, mamma?" said Miss Prescott, conscious suddenly of Trench's concentrated look at her. It suddenly flashed across his mind whether this pretty, fair, delicately pure looking girl had anything in her secret life which resembled Maud's. He looked for a moment, but the girlish innocence which was so transparent in her whole demeanor repelled the very question from the surface of his mind.

"Did not Mrs. St. John invite you to be her escort?" he suddenly heard Prescott ask him.

Trench was slightly confused.

"Yes, no-er- that is, she did, in a way. Isn't Mr. St. John going?"

"Oh, he has already!" replied Prescott. "He

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is gone to Chicago this afternoon to attend something or other, as the company is contemplating the purchase or mortgage of a western line. You need not look so tremendously overjoyed! Harry St. John is an ideal husband!"

"Oh, Willie, Willie!" exclaimed the ladies deprecatingly, as they were leaving the room in the possession of the two young men who stayed to finish their smoke.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

AN OUT-OF-TOWN PARTY.

The out-of-town party was lively and gay, and as entertaining as they could possibly have expected it to be. The drive was a lovely one; the trees were already budding; the air was warm, and the atmosphere was permeated with the delicious scent of spring. As Mrs. St. John and Mrs. Sampson were the matrons of the occasion, they preceded the rest, by an hour or two, and awaited the guests at the hotel where they were going to dine, and where they intended to have a little dancing afterward. Trench came with Mrs. St. John, but stood talking most of the time to Mrs. Sampson, who entertained him with many curious anecdotes, and more curious questions.

The rest were rapidly coming one after another. By and by, Trench, who espied through the window the approach of the Prescotts and Burwell, excused himself and ran out to receive Miss Prescott; but Burwell had anticipated him and, with an abrupt "How-do?" to Trench, was carefully assisting her to alight from the carriage. Miss Prescott looked very pretty and very bright, and kindly frank as she stepped out and gave her hand to Trench in salutation, while Burwell stood by stiff and serious, and

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glared when he saw Prescott approach Trench and hand him some letters which he said had come soon after he had left the house. Mrs. Drayton, who arrived soon after, was evidently bent upon monopolizing Prescott, who seemed meekly to resign himself to his fate.

Inside, everything was cheerful and cozy. The dinner went off with great eclat, and the party appeared in the best of spirits. Only Burwell seemed to lack that abandon, his cheerfulness appeared forced and verging on hilarity. They drank toasts, and laughed and talked, and some one told a couple of very funny stories. "Who is that man who thinks himself so seriously funny?" asked Trench of Prescott when they went into the room where they were to indulge in a little dancing, previous to the ballet performance.

"That man who is talking so attentively to Mrs. Drayton now? Oh, he is the sweet singer of Boston, our poet of sweetmeats! We have got all the intellect here, I suppose you know! That woman over there, you see she is smiling bewitchingly at the man with the glasses? She is one of our fixed stars. There is a tradition that she was very beautiful once and they show you one of their ancestral pictures to prove it. She has written many things, and has even wrestled with the Muses; with what success? You'd better ask her more partial friends; I am not one of them! She is not lame, as you see,

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but her Muse is! There is Mrs. St. John casting appealing glances in this direction. You'd better go and rescue her from that man! I know what he is, I dined with him once!"

Trench went off and, by and by, the dancing commenced. Mrs. St. John said she would dance, very little; she looked somewhat pale, and not quite herself, and told Trench she would not wait for the queen of the ballet, she would go home as early as possible. Burwell came up to ask her for a dance, and she stood up and danced resignedly a couple of figures when she asked to be led back to her chair. Burwell hardly said a word but he looked serious, his eyes were searching, his cheeks were flushed and he was gravely polite to her. He walked off and kept persistently dancing with Miss Prescott, and he could scarcely refrain from smiling when he saw Trench come up to her and ask for a dance and be refused. Trench, though, did not appear the least disconcerted. He stood there chatting pleasantly, passing remarks on the people present, and then, when her cavalier came up, he moved off, brushed past Burwell and joined Prescott, who was engaged in talking to Mrs. Drayton.

"Oh, here you are, Mr. Trench!" she said as he approached them. "I wish you could have some influence on Willie; he is becoming more and more dreadful every day; he is perfectly crazy to say something disagreeable about somebody."

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"As if that were my fault! You really are giving me a bad reputation!" rejoined Prescott. "And if Trench did not know me better I might suffer by it!"

"I agree with you, my dear fellow. Your reputation would suffer if I knew you better. As it is, I give you the benefit of the doubt. Whom was he depicting to you now, Mrs. Prescott?"

"Oh, he is so weird, Mr. Trench! He was talking about you, and goodness only knows what he was driving at, he is so crazy!"

"Talking about me, Prescott? Why, your wits must have gone a-wool-gathering if you couldn't find another subject," remarked Trench.

"Belike they have, my dear fellow! My wits have gone a-wool-gathering, and they alighted on you, my lamb!" replied Prescott. "Mrs. Drayton was asking me several things concerning your spiritual state and other things, and I told her you were a young man of thirty-four summers, that you indulged in the deleterious habit of smoking, that you measured five feet eight in your pumps, and eight feet five in your wits. I also told her that you were a very magnetic speaker, and that, as a member of Parliament, you were a great favorite of the ladies. What else, Mrs. Drayton? Oh, yes, I have not forgotten to mention to her the fact, that you have an astounding admiration of the fair sex in general, and that you are inclined to favor American women in particular; that you are ready to fall in love at

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the shortest notice, and that once in your life you very nearly came to marrying. I did not tell her the romantic circumstances attending the incident, did I? I did not even refer to the scar you have on your neck, did I? I remembered you were particularly secretive on that episode."

"If you talk very much longer, I will begin to believe that you are one of those American inventions which obtrude on you every moment!" replied Trench smilingly, while Mrs. Drayton looked up half seriously, half incredulously, asking, "Is that true, Mr. Trench? You know I never know when Willie is in jest or in earnest."

"Mrs. Drayton," replied Trench impressively, "there is the greatest difference in the world between artistic truth and photographic truth. Prescott has never learned the latter process and he is the most skillful artist in reproducing the former."

But at this moment Mrs. St. John came up, and asked Trench whether he would not accompany her home, as she felt she must return now—it was nearly eleven, and baby was sick, and she herself was feeling out of sorts.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

IN MAUD'S DRESSING ROOM.

It was past twelve when Maud and Trench alighted from the carriage at the St. John residence, and she handed him the key to unlock the door and asked him to enter. The lights in the hall and in the boudoir were still lighted, but everything was still in the house. She knew all the servants had gone to bed, but when they went upstairs into the boudoir, she asked him to sit quiet there while she could go upstairs and reassure herself of everything.

Trench sat there and waited, a strange feeling growing within him. He was half afraid, half exultant, and his thoughts were whirling. He did not stir. He sat there watching and listening, and when she came down again, looking pale, her eyes strikingly lustrous with their animated vigilance, and beckoned to him to follow her, he felt almost dizzy for a second. He ascended the stairs stealthily, quietly, and when he found himself in her charming little dressing-room, he breathed a sigh of relief, as if he had undergone the strain of a long and tedious suspense.

It was a delightful little room,— so cozy, so

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bright, with such a wealth of white draperies and mirrors here and there, that Trench was almost startled at the contrast which his own darkness and his clothes presented in the looking-glass. She walked about boldly, easily, but she talked in whispers, and asked him to move about softly. She took his hat from him, and sat down by his side on a low, soft settee, smiling happily, her face covered with a delicate blush, her eyes glistening and her breast heaving.

"How I wish you could stay here!" she said, looking lovingly into his face.

"I wish so, too, darling! but perhaps we could, by and by, be all and all to each other!" and he kissed her rapturously.

Suddenly he drew back a little, threw back his head and said:

"Listen, darling! You must go away with me, you must really go away from here; I cannot endure it, and you must not stand it! Won't you come away with me? Please, darling!"

"Dearest, dearest, don't urge me at present! I will come some time; not now, by and by; I have got to think it all over. Oh, how I wish I could go away with you now, and be all and everything to you! Oh, how I love you!" And again she fell to kissing him.

"How beautiful you are, my love!" he said when he loosened her hair and it fell in rich, wavy tresses over her shoulders accentuating the lovely whit-

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ness and smoothness of her skin. "You are so, so beautiful!" he added, kissing her shoulders, "and I love you so much, darling! How I long to have you as my own!"

"But am I not yours?" she asked. "Why, my darling!" she whispered, nestling up to him, "if my love cannot make me yours, then nothing in the world will. Hush! That's Nina's room upstairs!'

"Just think how happy we could be!" he was whispering a few minutes later as he was kneeling and unfastening her shoes. He kissed her ankles, they were so beautiful! they were so shapely! While she sat there pale, almost trembling, her eyes glistening and her hair falling wildly about her face.

"My love!" she whispered; and when he looked up she drew him nearer to her lips and kissed him silently and clung to him with passionate tenacity.

Suddenly he freed himself.

"Good God! he exclaimed, "what are we doing? I promised to protect you from everything till you were my wife!

There was gratitude as well as tears in her eyes, when she threw her arms impulsively round him and kissed him, whispering:

"Good-night, my love! Good-night, my love! Be very, very careful!"

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CHAPTER XXV.

TRENCH AND BURWELL COME TO BLOWS.

Trench walked down stairs carefully, stealthily, feeling his way, touching every object with his hands in front of him, and, when his foot once knocked against something, he stood still a moment or two craning his neck this way and that and straining his hearing to listen whether anybody was stirring in the house. Not a sound, not a movement; everything was still save the deep tones of the melodious chimes which struck the half hour in some room downstairs. At last he was in the hallway, gently, almost tremulously, opening the door, and as carefully closing it, and the next moment he was in the street.

He breathed freer. The night was dark; the atmosphere was warm, almost oppressively sultry; the heavens were starless, and the softness of the night accentuated the reigning silence around him. With what tumultuous feelings he stepped down the entrance of the St. John's residence, with what conflicting sensations he walked across the street and hastened his pace to reach home!

Everything that had happened to him that evening, all the pleasurable sensations, all the delicious

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excitations, the delicate and alluring influences of the dressing-room which breathed and enraptured him with something so exquisitely feminine, and the passionate impulses which her love, her beauty, and her form wakened in him, all crowded on his memory in one vague though distinctly happy image of Maud, whose love was so yielding to him, whose love was pregnant with such a host of charms, graces and voluptuous suggestiveness, all of which was his, was his!

But stop, though! Wasn't somebody calling him? He certainly heard a voice, he certainly heard his own name. He had been walking so fast, his thoughts were so clamorous that he had not heard those footsteps behind him which had been following him, almost the moment he got down the steps. He halted, looked round and waited. Somebody was approaching him, in fact was the next moment by his side. "It's Burwell; well I never!" thought Trench.

"You here?" he said aloud, a sensation of angry suspicions sweeping over him for a moment. "You seem to recognize my step pretty well, don't you? For the life of me, I wouldn't have recognized you on such a dark night!"

"Oh, you wouldn't?" replied Burwell unconcernedly. "I overtook you just as you left the St. Johns. We left soon after you went. Walking homeward, eh? Just left the Prescotts home. What

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a fine girl Miss Prescott is!" he added as they both walked on. They had crossed Charles street and were entering the Common now; they were both walking pretty fast. Burwell was leading and Trench was following. He did not like Burwell's manner; he glanced at him scrutinizingly once or twice, but the light which was thrown on him as they passed Charles street only revealed the pallor of a set face.

Trench did not think what to reply to the last remark, since it was perfectly in place and certainly did not in the least confirm his suspicions, so he contented himself by saying:

"Yes, very charming, isn't she?"

"A damn fine girl; so much spirit and that sort of thing about her, isn't there? Only I'll be damned if any of the girls come up to our married women; our married women are famous; splendidly developed, don't you know! Miss Prescott will be a lovely woman after she is married a year or two."

"You think so?"

"Yes, they all are that way. They bloom out after marriage. I guess it's love that makes a woman look her best, and the more they love, the better they look, don't you know, eh?"

"You seem to have made a careful study of the subject?"

"Can't help it, you know, with so much going on before your eyes. I remember Mrs. St. John not half the beauty she is now before her marriage.

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How magnificently she has developed! Are you going to write a book about us and that sort of thing when you return to England, as that confounded Count says he is doing?"

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing! Only if you are, take Mrs. St. John as a specimen of the higher class American woman; she is perfectly grand, isn't she?"

"She is wonderfully lovely!"

"Yes, and so damnable lovable, too, isn't she? Gad, what a form she has got! It's a fair wind that wafted you across the Atlantic, I can tell you that!"

"Why, Mr. Burwell?"

"Why, aren't you happy, Mr. Trench? And hasn't Mrs. St. John exquisite taste in everything about her? I think her own room the loveliest thing I've ever seen. And even in husbands, her choice is perfect! What could there be more desirable than Harry? He is a cousin of mine, you know!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and I am a cousin of hers; but that doesn't matter! We all love a beautiful woman. The question only is whether the beautiful woman loves all of us, isn't that so?"

"How? I don't quite understand!"

"No? It's going to rain, I guess; it feels sultry enough for a thunderstorm! Jove, what funny things there are in this world, and the world doesn't know it! How is Mrs. St. John? How did you leave her?"

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"Mrs. St. John is very well."

"Very well said! You haven't got such nice arrangements in England, have you?"

"About what?"

"About women, and that sort of thing, eh? America is a great country; every man does as he damn pleases, and besides that, every woman makes her husband do as she pleases, too! That's about it!"

"Americans are very gallant."

"Eh? Englishmen are great connoisseurs about women, aren't they? What do you think of Maud's form, of Mrs. St. John's form?"

Trench stopped short. The question was so abrupt, and he had been so watchfully on the alert all the time for something that Burwell evidently meant to imply by all this strange, nervous talk of his, that he was fairly taken aback. He felt a chill creep over him.

"Of her form?" he asked in a astonishment.

"Yes, isn't she beautiful in her shape? You know what! It's great to have such a woman love you, isn't it? A man only needs the experience of such a love once to be able to stand a life's misery afterward, at least, so men say. I thought so once myself, till I found out that God made man and the devil made the woman. Since then I have been afraid of my salvation! You need not stop here, come along!"

"Mr. Burwell, you are drunk!" said Trench, stand-

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ing still and looking Burwell closely in the face. Burwell turned round sharply, as if something had staggered him.

"No, I am mad!" he replied with apparent indifference. "You will be, too, by and by, if you love Maud! You think yourself happy to-night, don't you? So was I, a few weeks ago, the happiest fellow in the world! I felt as you feel now; I lived as you live now, thinking the world a dream and that dream, my happiness. Well, I have been waked up; things must have their turn; there is nothing stationary or lasting under the moon, not even Maud's love! Never mind, though, there is flesh enough in this world, and if you give fish, you can always get flesh in return, and—"

But Burwell did not finish. Trench had suddenly struck him in the face, and the blow acted on him as if he had suddenly been stung.

Burwell threw himself at his antagonist with a strange, choking yell. Both were strong men; both knew the right use of their fists. A few sharp blows were interchanged, then the men clinched in a violent grip. In the dark they struggled, the passion of their rivalry, all the venom of their antagonism tightening their muscles and firing both of them with a deadly determination.

Everything around them was silent, but they were oblivious to everything. Their blood was on fire. They swayed hither and thither; the antagonists bent

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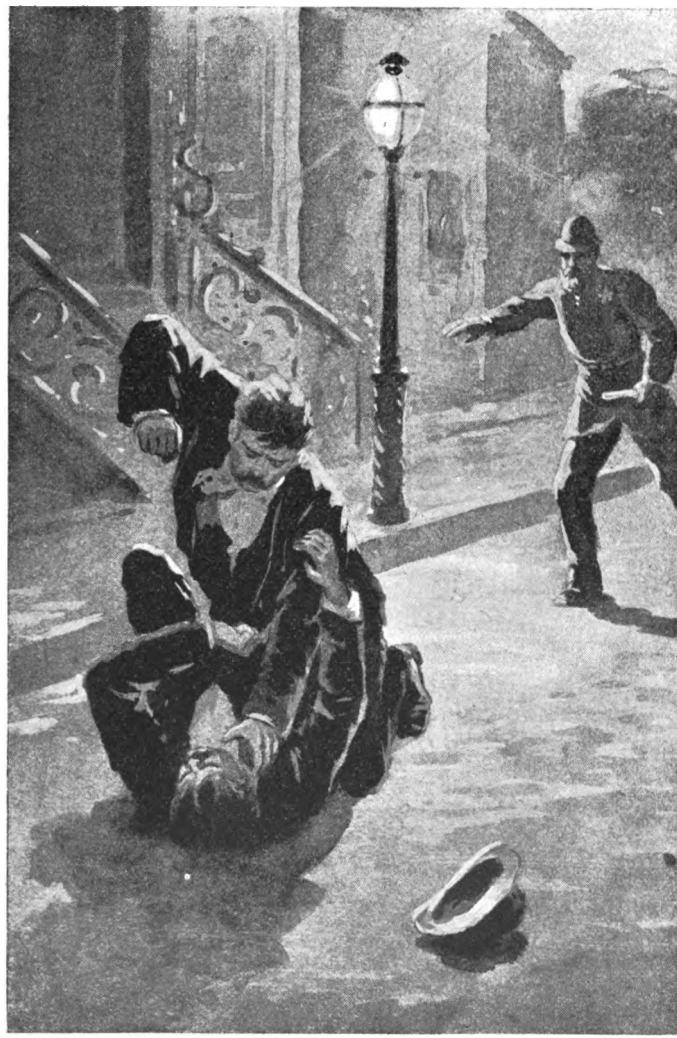

"TRENCH WAS ON TOP OF BURWELL."

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each other nearly to the ground and then rose again. Once, they broke away and fell to again with their fists; their blows resounded loud and hard; they both hit as deadly as they could, but they soon clinched again in the same iron grip.

Not a word, not an exclamation, not a sound escaped their lips. There was something wildly passionate in each man's struggle to overcome the other, and each strained every muscle of his body, every fiber of his strength to down the other. Once Trench was nearly on his knee, but he quickly recovered and swung back on Burwell with a force that would have been fatal, had he not struck against a bench. The next moment they both felt to the ground with a terrible thud. Trench was on top of Burwell, but the latter's grip was as unrelaxed and as unclasping as if it were of iron. "Scoundrel!" escaped a hissing sound from Burwell's lips, when suddenly they heard a gruff voice near them.

"Get up both of ye, or I'll brain you to a jelly!"

Both men jumped up in an instant and, for a moment or two, stood perfectly dazed. The earth swam underneath Burwell; he staggard backward and would have fallen had not the policeman, who approached them, gruffly caught hold of him. This seemed to bring Trench to consciousness. He rushed toward him and asked anxiously, "Are you hurt?"

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"No!" replied Burwell, "only I am bleeding I don't know where from. Lead me to the club!"

"It's to a different club I'll lead you to, me gentlemen!" said the policemen roughly laying his hands on Burwell's and Trench's arms.

"Don't be too smart now, d'you hear?" cried out Burwell impatiently and angrily. "Lead me to the 'Brahmin's!' I am bleeding to death, I tell you, you fool!"

It was not very far from the Club, and the policeman, convinced by the emphatic tones of his prisoner, led him toward it. He had not released Trench from his grip yet, but as they began to ascend the stairs, and the porter came down with such alacrity and with such solicitousness to receive them, the policeman became more lax in his authoritative determination. He let both his prisoners go, but before Burwell entered his reading room he turned round to Trench and whispered—"You'd better give something to that damn fool and tell him to hold his tongue!"

Trench turned round to execute his charge, while Burwell, all covered with blood, was led into the room where he was soon surrounded by a few alarmed friends and attendants. The wound only proved a scalp and not the least dangerous. In falling, his head evidently must have knocked against a sharp stone, but one of the members present who

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was a doctor dressed it and pronounced it "a mere nothing, a false alarm!"

Trench "squared" with the policeman and came into the room. His clothes were dirty and his shirt front besmeared. He was hatless and his hair was all tossed; his eyes roamed wildly around, and he had a big red scratch on his forehead.

And now they all began to question Burwell how it all happened and what it all meant. They guyed Trench at his disreputable appearance, and suggested a number of things as the probable explanation of what had taken place, urging, all the while, both Burwell and Trench to tell them what had happened when suddenly Burwell jumped up and exclaimed:

"Garroted! Jove, What a narrow escape from those ruffians! and what a sight I am! Come, Trench, let's go home; I am tired to death!"

Trench was rather taken back by this sudden action on the part of Burwell, but he followed him involuntarily. Outside, they were handed their hats by the attendant, who had brushed them as clean as possible.

As soon as they got into the hack and the servant slammed the door after them, Burwell turned to Trench and said:

"The reason I talked like that before the fellows was, I didn't want them to suspect anything."

"I am glad you did," replied Trench. "You

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must not tell her anything about it. She must not know a word of the whole affair, or suspect anything, either. Do you promise?"

"Yes; she won't know a thing so far as I am concerned. And the Prescotts?"

"You may rely upon me. I'll stop here, if you please. I am sorry I hurt you; you know where to find me; good-night!" and Trench jumped out from the hack, and a few minutes later was locked within his room.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

AN EVENING AT THE BRAHMIN'S.

One evening—it was two or three days after the encounter — Trench, Prescott and Harry St. John were all at the Brahmin's, sitting, smoking and chatting with two or three other men present. Trench had still that scar on his forehead; Burwell had hardly shown up at the Club at all yet; he had only slunk in once for a few minutes and disappeared again, and as far as his friends knew, was altogether invisible. There had been a great deal of gossip going on lately, in the Club and outside of it, which involved Burwell and Trench, but the gossip was limited to good-natured jesting at the expense of their prowess, and the plight in which they appeared that night.

'Tis contrary to that masculine propensity of teasing which miserably passes amongst men for convivial joking, not to insinuate a woman as the real cause for all sublunary trouble; and in the case of Burwell and Trench the names of several ladies were bruited about as the palpable explanation of their fight that night. "Garroted! Fiddlesticks!" said one man, whose reputation as the wit of the Club was based on a powerful joke he once made in French,

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at which the distinguished Frenchman laughed more than the apparently unconscious perpetrator of it. "Only, I tell you one thing, Mr. Trench," he added, lighting a cigar; "you'll have to get your head scalped altogether; you'll have to do one better than you did to Burwell if you want to win the fair one."

"I don't agree with you," Prescott joined in. "A scar on the forehead is more interesting than a wound on the scalp."

"It may be so with English women, but our American ladies prefer the genuine article," replied the wit.

"On the contrary;" argued Prescott, "our women have too strong an instinct of advertising; a scar on the forehead tells the whole romance in a nutshell, and he who runs may read it, while a wound on your scalp? you've got to turn the man round to feel about his hair in order to see it—it's no good!"

"That's just it!" contended the wit; "you've got to feel about the head; the tender little hand gets up all the sympathy that there is in the soft heart. Oh, it's a great thing, an invisible deep or dangerous wound is! If I had intentions of wooing anybody I would care for nothing better than some such deep calamity to befall me. I think I would fight the first strong man I met or throw myself under the first donkey-cart I saw—"

"Well, I don't care what *you* may do!" replied Prescott. "I still hold that a scar on the forehead

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is the best thing a man can have who has an eye for the hearts of ladies. Why, my dear fellow, just think! Just imagine coming into the room where your dear girl is sitting, with that scar Trench has on his forehead. There is nothing necessary for him to do or say. He must only look a little serious, and be a little more impetuous in his manner of embracing her. She will see it all at once. A fight, a duel, a miraculous escape from battle, murder, and sudden death, a deadly encounter with giants, and what not—all this will at once flash on her imagination and kindle all her compassionate sensibilities. And then? Oh, the tender smoothing of her hand over the scar—so! The caressing look into his eyes, the propinquity of her lips, and the world of charmed sympathy and that sort of thing that'll heave from her breast! . . . I appeal to you all, gentlemen, whether a scar on the forehead is not a thousand times preferable!"

Prescott was really amusing in his drawing of the picture, which he enlivened by illustrating on Trench all those affectionate gestures he was speaking of. The company present was immensely entertained by it, while St. John laughed heartily, and said:

"Well, Prescott, your picture is so life-like, when and where were you wounded? Let us examine him, Trench; I wouldn't be surprised if we found a number of razor-wounds on his neck or somewhere."

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Though Trench smiled good-humoredly, he felt a little uneasy at Prescott's description and almost winced when he began to depict the tender smoothing over his forehead. All this sinister laughing at it, and St. John joining in with them, jarred upon him inwardly and seemed to darken the memories with which he was trying to comfort himself. It struck him, suddenly, that he was a stranger there; that he had nothing in common with all these men, that he had a life of his own, a secret life and thoughts, which were more congenial to undisturbed solitude than talkative assemblies, and he wished to be alone then, away from everything and everybody. He hated to think that Prescott's jesting and St. John's laughing should have diminished the tender charm which Maud's caresses had for him an hour or two before, though Prescott had almost catalogued all the manners and attitudes with which she met him the first time after that night, when she discovered the red mark on his forehead. He wanted to get up and go out; he thought he would enjoy walking down Beacon street and thinking it all over; he wanted to escape from them all, when suddenly somebody who was turning over the pages of a paper in the room exclaimed: "Hello! Here's the whole thing in the papers."

"A MYSTERIOUS MIDNIGHT ENCOUNTER"

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"SCIONS OF THE BACK BAY EXCHANGE ANGRY BLOWS,"
WALLOW IN THE GRAVEL ON THE COMMON, AND
THE WORD 'SCOUNDREL' STARTLES
THE MIDNIGHT STILLNESS!"

All eyes turned in the direction of the man who was reading out the headlines. Trench felt himself getting pale, but he also turned around quickly and listened attentively, while the others, not without amusement in their voices, cried out: "Read it all! Read it all!" The man took up the paper and read aloud:

"For the last few days there has been considerable talk, and the members of the four hundred have been greatly excited over an event which nearly threatened to disclose one of those dormant and hidden scandals which have become such a regular feature of fashionable life in New York, but which the Back Bay has usually the better taste of concealing. It appears, that while Officer——— was making his beat around the side of the Common over Beacon street, his attention was arrested by a loud scuffling in front of him. He hastened to the spot just in time to see two men fall to the ground with a dull thud, the under one expressing his descent by hissing out, 'Scoundrel,' while the one above him was beginning to make effective use of his fists. The officer who mistook them for a pair of ruffians shook them up roughly and was going to haul into the lockup, when their dress suits and shirt fronts proclaimed their station to be of a somewhat different calling, and, as they were members of the neighboring club, their wounds and scratches were more carefully attended to there than they would have been at the City Hospital or at Station 2. The proffered offices of the guardian of the peace

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were politely declined, as they would not trouble him to call for any special vehicle, perferring to hire the plebeian hacks stationed outside. The two men when they came to their senses thought it best to conceal the affair from the curiosity of those eager to know everything about it, and an attempt at sandbagging was given out as the slender explanation of an incident which, if wholly revealed, would involve in scandal one of the proudest residents of the Back Bay. As it is, society is on the *qui vive* for further developments, though the two men have tried their utmost to patch up appearances for the woman's sake."

"What paper is that in?" asked somebody.

"The Boston Howler."

"Why, that's Burwell's own paper. Burwell has got an interest in it, hasn't he?" asked some one else.

"Yes, that's his paper!" replied St. John, and turning round to Trench he added, "Oh, you don't know yet what American journalism means; you'd better make a clean breast of it to us."

"You see I told you there was a woman in it!" cried the wit.

"Oh, I didn't doubt it from the first moment I saw his hat and dress suit," remarked Prescott. "No man would sacrifice his dress suit and shirt front unless there was a woman in the case! Here's Frank!" he exclaimed, seeing Burwell enter the room.

"Here you are!" they all exclaimed, and the wit added.

"You are just in time, Burwell, to deny the allega-

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tion Mr. Trench has been making against you, namely, that you have tried to 'garrot' away from him his beauty, and that he had to knock you down for it."

Burwell turned round and flashed an angry glance at all the men present, but when he noticed St. John, he went over to shake hands with him, while he bowed to Trench, and called out "How are ye!" to Prescott.

"Well, my dear fellows, you've had great sport, haven't you, the last few days?" asked Burwell in a cheerfully careless voice. His face was flushed, his manner was nervous, and there seemed to be a devil-may-care sort of an air about him which was not natural to him.

"Great sport!" replied a chorus. "Come, give's some more!"

"All in good time, all in good time, my brethren!" as the parson said to his congregation who were on a fair way to the other place. "Now, candidly, how many jokes have you cracked on me?" he asked, turning to the wit.

"No more than the blows that cracked your skull!" replied the wit, at which they all laughed. "Has it healed?" he asked, following up his advantage. "Has she smoothed and caressed it tenderly? Come, here they are, both here; Prescott and I had a dispute about the effectiveness of scars and wounds on the hearts of the ladies. Tell us, both of

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you, your experiences, and we'll see which to choose in case of necessity."

"Yes, Frank; do tell us all about it!" cried St. John and Prescott. "Trench has told us all about how his dear girl acted," added the latter; "now, let us hear your experience!"

"Oh, well, if you heard Mr. Trench's, that's more than your souls could stand one evening. Besides, I wouldn't for the life of me tell it here and mar the romantic effect of the first story, would you, Mr. Trench?"

Trench smiled uneasily, moved on his chair, and glancing at St. John, he said:

"I don't know! A man of such experience as yours could always improve on things that have already been done!"

Burwell regarded him with a steadfast, concentrated look; his eyes filled with an expression of ill will, if not rage.

"I suppose Burwell keeps the best part of his adventures for his newspaper!" somebody remarked.

"Yes, oh, yes!" cried Prescott, "quite forgot! What's the Back Bay scandal you are going to reveal in the newspapers? Come, tell us all about it!"

"Yes, do tell us a Back Bay scandal!" said the wit, drawing a chair nearer him. Burwell looked round in astonishment.

"What scandal?" he asked, looking from one to the other.

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"Oh, there *is* some scandal; you needn't pretend to look the Apostle Paul about it. Your newspaper says so!" continued the wit.

"My paper?"

"Yes, didn't you see it?" and he was handed the newspaper with the piece in it. Burwell read it over cursorily, his face blanched all of a sudden.

"Some damn fool is trying to be too smart!" he said between his teeth. "Waiter, give me a brandy and soda!"

"Well, aren't you going to tell us all about it?" persisted the wit. "We are dying to hear the dormant Back Bay scandal. Wake it up! Wake it up, Burwell!"

"This doesn't lie within my province, gentlemen!" Burwell replied. "Give me one of your cigars, Harry! Mr. Trench might know more about it; strangers and foreigners generally do know more about it than we do ourselves! Things of that kind generally furnish interesting items in books that are meant to sell. Thank you, I'll have a light, too, please!"

Trench hardly looked at him.

"Will some one inform me what the Back Bay is?" he said interestedly. "It is not for my book which Mr. Burwell is so anxious for me to write about Boston, I assure you! It's simply for private information."

"You don't know what the Back Bay is?" they all exclaimed in derision of such blatant ignorance.

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"The Back Bay is the Belgravia, no, the Mayfair; no, the Fauburg St. Germain of Boston!" said Prescott. "America is the greatest continent in the universe; United States, the greatest nation in the world; and the Back Bay, the most cultured spot in the states. We all live there; outside of that, there are over sixty millions of humanity scattered here and there, but that's nothing; the Back Bay is everything!"

"Well, miracles will never cease!" remarked the wit. "Here's Prescott, praising up his own country!"

"Gentlemen, I always do that before strangers!" replied Prescott. "I am a true Yankee in that respect, I am jealous of everything pertaining to our glorious country, and reserve the privilege of abusing it as the inalienable right of a free-born American!"

"Well, there's something in that!" remarked Trench. "So that is the Back Bay to which the newspapers are always referring? Why do they call it the Back Bay?"

"Oh, why they call it Back Bay?" exclaimed Burwell. "Because it is the Back Bay! The Back Bay is a marsh. Everything you see there—all those grand houses, all those splendid residences rest on a marsh. The foundation of the whole district is unsubstantial at its best, and damnably rotten at the bottom. The whole thing is an abnormal conception, and the men and women who crowd there are the ridiculous executions of a creator who in

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sending them to the world forgot to give them their souls. We live here without life, we exist here automatically, propped up on artificial contrivances that could not withstand the first gust of realities. Here's my health to you, Mr. Trench! Oh, the Back Bay is a great place! We all live and rest on appearances and conventionalities, and go to pieces when we encounter actualities. Pleasure is the great object of our life, and the greatest object of our pleasure is to be esteemed differently from what we really are! Shall I tell you what the men and women of the Back Bay are?" he added fiercely, with blood-shot eyes—but encountering Trench's angry look, he paused, looked round, smiled at all who were staring at him and, then added in a more quite voice, "Oh, I forgot! we have no men and women at the Back Bay—we are all ladies and gentlemen, and *you* know what that means!"

"Lord have mercy on us!" exclaimed Prescott. "Why, Burwell, you are not going to write an editorial for your Howler, are you?"

"What vintage has given thee thine eloquence, prithee?" asked the wit, while St. John, who listened to his tirade with open eyes, remarked:

"Well, Frank, if your skull isn't cracked, you are cracked somewhere, I am sure! You'd better have another brandy and soda with me. Waiter, ask the gentlemen what they'll have! I must go home soon; my son and heir has been protesting

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clamorously against something for the last day or two, and I left Mrs. St. John with Mary," he said a few minutes later. "I promised your sister to send both of you for her;" he added, turning to Prescott and Trench; "are you going to stay here, Burwell?"

"No, I am going home;" he answered abruptly. "Is baby sick?" he asked, with a clouded face.

"Yes, he has been ailing for the last day or two. I guess he'll be all right soon. You have been quite a stranger, Frank," said St. John as he stood up to go.

"Oh, I've been somewhat busy of late," he replied sulkily, as they all walked out of the club.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

MAUD'S LOCKET.

If Trench needed anything to explicate his feelings, the encounter with Burwell accomplished it emphatically. He felt ill at ease, dissatisfied with himself, discontented with his surroundings, distrustful of everything, and, in reality, felt himself getting entangled in a knotty predicament. Burwell's words and manner of that night, his slighting references to Maud's person, beauty and love, jarred harshly on his sensibilities and, though, whenever he thought of it, he felt a strong inclination to throw himself at Burwell and beat him, kill him, torture him to death, the remembrance of what he said opened a disagreeable chain of reflections in his mind that were almost as poignantly painful to himself as the blows would have been to Burwell.

The fact that he had discovered the identity of her lover had as forcible effect on his sensibilities as the difference of the generic and the specific would have had on his mind. Whenever he allowed himself to contemplate going away with her somewhere, there immediately arose to his imagination the image of Burwell, standing and fiendishly mocking her affection and devotion, and triumphantly saying: "I was happy as you were once; you cannot be happier!"

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The encounter of that night seemed to have taken away all the beautiful charm of her love; seemed to have cheapened, almost vulgarized her in his eyes; and when he was away from her he was more conscious of a tender, devoted pity for her than of passionate love. But Trench was not of the temper which is easily swayed by the impetus of sensations. He was keenly alive to a delicate sense of duty to women, and the fact that he had accepted her love, that he had been ready, almost, to take her all to himself, animated him with an attachment for her which rose above mere impulse or passionate desire. He resolved to stand by her and see the development of things, though his surroudings were becoming daily and hourly more intolerable to him. He thought, if he could only share his thoughts with somebody! He had looked so often, so searchingly, into the pretty and delicate outlines of Miss Prescott's face, and had almost an irresistible longing to tell her everything; but, he thought, he must not! It was not his life, his actions, his secrets, that he had to deal with; they were all about Maud, and he must wait and bear in silence, and watch in patience, and act as he alone deemed best in the case.

Accordingly when he saw Maud—and he met her daily—his whole manner and attitude were such as not to betray the least change of feelings on his part. In fact, he was hardly conscious of any change be-

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yond that of being more observant, more critically alive to all her actions and sayings than he had hitherto been, and the smallest jarring effect on her part would stir up a very discontented feeling within him. But most of the time he was with her, he remained acquiescently happy, he resigned himself to all the influences of her charms and graces; he loved her, he kissed her, he admired her beauty and gradually felt himself contemplating a future when she and he would be all alone, and she would be everything to him.

What was the matter? she asked him repeatedly, kissing the scar on his forehead. Has he really scratched himself accidentally? Really and truly? How droll! she kept saying and coaxing him to tell her a more romantic episode than that, and Trench's frowns and clouds were rapidly chased off his brows, and he smiled happily on her, and felt almost a flood of sunshine inundate his inmost being. It was no use resisting her when he was with her.

On the day following the meeting at the club, Trench received a note from Maud, asking him to come down and lunch with them. When he came, she was in the little ante-room leading off the boudoir; she took hold of both his hands, kissed him, and said, "Now, darling, you must tell me all about it after lunch. Harry is going out for a few hours and you'll stay here and tell me everything. He has been telling me all that was said at the club last

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night, and I have read that nasty piece in the paper. It's getting quite wild!"

St. John left as soon as lunch was over, and Maud and Trench hurried back to the little ante-room. There was a fire crackling in the grate; outside was chilly, damp, and drizzly; the day was cheerless and gray, and the comfort diffused in the room was particularly inviting to confidential conversations.

Maud sat down on a little stool near him and prepared herself to listen. Trench attempted to demur, but she insisted. "I would tell you even if it were the inmost secret of my friend's soul. I could keep nothing from you. Do tell me and don't be a tease!" she said, looking up to him with pleadingly large eyes.

Trench hesitated a moment and then told her in a few words what had taken place. He said, that night he left the house, he was overtaken by Burwell, and on the latter's passing some insolent remarks about her, he struck him. "I couldn't help it, darling! I couldn't for the life of me; the man was so insulting! It's a wonder I let him go alive!" he added.

Maud got somewhat pale. She seemed to cogitate over something and then said: "What did he say about me?"

"Oh, nothing, love, really nothing! If it hadn't been for the suspicious circumstances under which he overtook me, and if you hadn't been the person

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he was so talking about, I probably wouldn't have taken the slightest notice of it all. But as it was, one thing combined with the others produced those disagreeable consequences, and I am sorry, very sorry, darling, if it caused you the least annoyance!"

Maud was apparently abstracted in some visions then. "And didn't the Prescotts see you come in?" she asked. "Doesn't Prescott suspect? I know Mary is dying to know all about it and, last night when she was here, she told me she was dreadfully mystified, in fact we both laid ourselves out to ply both of you and to find it all out."

"But, my darling, you are not going to tell anything to Miss Prescott of what I have told you?" Trench exclaimed. "Why, I gave him my word that the Prescotts would never know a thing about it, at least, so far as I was concerned in the matter."

"Oh, don't be afraid! I wonder whether Harry suspects anything? He almost said as much, but he is furious and has written Burwell to use his influence in suppressing further publications on the subject. It will be perfectly dreadful if the newspapers get hold of the subject What are you looking at and thinking about?" she asked suddenly, noticing his steady, serious gaze at her. Trench roused himself. "Oh, nothing in particular!" he said. "I was looking at your beautiful eyes and thinking of you. Come over and sit nearer me!"

Maud moved her chair nearer his and leaned

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against him. He put his arms round her neck and looked over her shoulders.

"He is perfectly crazy. I don't know what he won't do if he is driven to desperation!" she said languidly.

"Who?"

"Oh, that man Burwell!"

Her metallic, indifferent reference to the man who but a short time ago was nearer to her than he himself was at this minute jarred on Trench disagreeably and made his tone sound rather sharp when he replied:

"Well, you are not afraid of him, are you?"

"Afraid? No!" she replied spiritedly, "but he could make it very disagreeable for both of us, if he really has got a mind to! Oh, I've got to get up and run and see how baby is! Baby is very sick and Nina is by his side all the time; it's perfectly cunning to see them both together!"

"It must be!" assented Trench, as he rose to help her up.

When she returned she sat down in the same posture and they chatted together pleasantly, Maud evincing an inclination to abandon herself to the inviting influences of the comfortable warmth of her surroundings.

"You know," she turned round to him once and said, resting her head on his knee; "you know I feel myself so much at peace and at rest with you,

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darling! And I cannot think of anything else but the present when I am with you!"

Trench imprinted a kiss on her head and forehead, and when raising her head he noticed a pretty, heart-shaped locket dangling on her breast.

"Why, how pretty!" he said, looking at it and handling it.

"Isn't it?" she said. Trench tried to open it, and when he succeeded, instead of discovering some picture incased, he simply read the engraving of "13 March, 1886." A little clover leaf was entangled amongst the ciphers, while the other side was wrought with a pretty design, the center of which eradiated with a lustrous, lovely stone.

"What's this?" he asked, inquisitively, when suddenly his eyes met her look, and he saw that she felt somewhat confused—that she was absolutely blushing. Trench roused himself. A suspicion swept across his mind that she was wearing something somebody gave her. Perhaps it was Burwell's gift!

"Where did you get it?" he asked, still looking at the design. "And what does that date mean on it?"

Maud, who was still blushing, drew herself away from him, closed the locket, and, looking up to him appealingly, she said:

"Please, darling, don't ask me! You promised you wouldn't."

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"I don't think you should wear anything which reminds you of something you either regret, are ashamed of, or cannot tell me!"

"Oh, well, you are already becoming jealous!" she said, half sadly, half indifferently. Trench winced and glanced at her searchingly. She was gazing into the fire, her features contracted in a seriously thoughtful cast. Without saying another word, he bent toward her, unfastened the little chain, took off the locket, and the next moment had thrown it into the fire.

"How dare you!" exclaimed Maud, springing to her feet, her eyes flashing indignantly at him, her face flushed with anger. Trench was also on his feet, looking at her with a determined and flushed face, his manner and attitude watchfully commanding. He did not reply; he stood expectant.

"I want you to understand, once for all, that I have a right to do as I please, and that if things don't please you that I do—" She hesitated.

"Well?" he asked.

"You should ask me not to do them—not take things into your own hands!" And Maud turned away and walked over to the window.

"You must pardon me if I was hasty," he said, quickly but resolutely; "but you must understand that I cannot allow you to wear anything Mr. Burwell ever gave you—at least, when I am with you!"

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"You should have waited to find out whose it was before you acted like that!"

"Who gave you that locket, Maud?"

She did not answer. She sat down on a seat by the window and had turned away her head from him, and sat there without looking round. Trench stood waiting.

"Well, aren't you going to tell me?" he asked.

But instead of answering, she struggled to hide her tears and suppress her sobbing. It touched Trench to the quick, and he walked over and sat down in his former seat, resting his head on his hands, and gazing into the fire and thinking. Suddenly he saw the locket in the fire, dangling from a piece of wood. Only the chain had been affected by the heat, and he was debating with himself whether he should rescue the locket from the fire or not. When he saw the fire dancing near it he could resist no longer and, reaching for the tongs, seized the locket and threw it on the carpet near him. Then he jumped up and walked over to Maud, and took hold of her hands.

"Please don't cry, and forgive me for being so hasty and harsh with you!" he said, tenderly. "But you know I was so mortified to think you could wear anything of that man Burwell's."

"But it wasn't Burwell's!" she exclaimed, through tears. "And it is cruel! It is too cruel of you to suspect me always! Oh, I am so miserable! Every-

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body and everything is against me! Oh, I am so miserable!" she kept repeating, while Trench drew her nearer to him, saying all the while:

"Please don't cry! If it isn't Burwell's, I don't mind! How could I have acted otherwise? Think, yourself! You are my love, my all—my wife, I almost said; and for you to wear that man's gifts, as I thought you did! Please forgive me and kiss me, darling; won't you?"

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

BURWELL REVIEWS HIS PAST AND MAUD'S LETTERS.

Burwell had not yet succumbed to the pressure of the actual. He still chafed, fretted, fumed over it, and interpreted the present by his own intense dislike of its circumstances as a monstrous impossibility. He spent hours in his rooms conjuring up the whole situation, analyzing it all, and refusing to understand it. He called himself a hundred times a dolt, blamed himself for the whole affair, said it was all his foolish jealousy which had brought his own trouble on him; he even endeavored to believe that Maud would return to him after Trench had gone, but there was a hollow in his heart and no conviction in his mind, in spite of the pleasing assurances which he could command with his fancy. The next moment he was plunged again into despair, recalled the whole of Maud's conduct for the past few weeks, and saw nothing but darkness, blackness before him.

"Good and merciful God!" he cried again and again, fairly distracted with the force of the thought. "Good and merciful God! Can all this be possible?" Was everything really at an end between himself and Maud? Has she really given herself up, body and soul, to that man? Oh, he knew her but too well!

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He knew how intolerant she was of anything half-hearted or incomplete, and if she at all loved him, how wholly and entirely she had given herself to him!

Burwell even, sometimes, began to doubt whether she had ever loved him at all; whether the last two or three years had not all been a dream from which he was now being wakened and whether the present reality was not the actual past in which madness, or drunkenness, or something had made him see everything in such a different light? He thought, sometimes, he would go insane; he was tortured by reflections, and when he recollected that night, that encounter with Trench, he felt almost a choking sensation in his throat.

Burwell kept mostly to his rooms, went out but very little, and was becoming daily and hourly more morose and more intolerably discontented. He laughed bitterly to himself at times when he dwelt on his present situation and, when he recalled his last visit to Maud's—that morning after the ball—when she for the thousandth time, probably, within a year or two, had promised to love him and be his own forever and ever. . . . Good heavens! and he had often had scruples about Harry; he had often felt conscience-stricken in thinking that he wasn't honest, that he was, in fact, betraying Harry's confidence. And here she was!

And yet it can't be that she is bad! he argued to

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himself. "Damn it! a woman with such a good heart with such a good soul could not be bad!" How lovely she was; what a thorough woman of the world! There must be some fatality in her nature, though! Otherwise she could not so easily change her affections from one man to another and so rapidly forget one in thinking of the other! Perhaps she had never yet loved any one really and truly? he asked himself. Perhaps it was all only the expression of a striving, impetuous nature, whose outward impulses were the index of a deep, passionate and devoted soul, who had not yet yielded herself wholly to anybody? Perhaps Harry and the other and himself were the mere accidents in her way, and Trench was the first one she had met to whom her whole heart and soul went out?

But what was the use; why should he trouble himself about all this? Why shouldn't he throw it all off and be a man and laugh at her and at all those who don't laugh with him? She loved somebody else, why should he not love some one else, too? Had she not laughed at him and jilted him and cheated, him, too? There was so much to remind them of their love!

He walked over to his desk as the last thought flashed across his mind, mechanically unlocked one of the drawers, took out a little bag of letters, which on untying, he sat down and began to read. They were all Maud's letters from the very beginning of

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their love, when they thought the interim of a day could be best endured by writing notes to each other.

He took them out one by one, opened them; some of them he only glanced over, others he read through carefully, restored them to the envelopes and laid down again. They were sweet notes, but, now that he read them through critically, they did not impress him as pregnant with that tenderness which he recollected discovering when he first received them. They were not written from the heart as his had been to her; they were hastily scribbled, and suggested passing and, in one case, forced emotions. This one spoke of happiness which she longed for and looked forward to having in some distant or near future; that note was an invitation to come to dinner, with love, and a long, long kiss. Here was a long letter giving a lively description how she passed the time while she was staying a couple of days with some of her relations in Manchester. But now Burwell took out a separate little package of letters, tied with a black ribbon, which he unfastened and began to read. They were different from those he had been glancing over before. The tone, the spirit, and everything else had changed in them. They were not brilliant, not even lively; they were rather sad, and one of them was affectingly pathetic.

She was in the period approaching the birth of her baby, and all the instincts of the woman had asserted themselves in her; all her higher nature had

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gained the ascendency, and she was speaking in her letters without a moment's thought, without the slightest manner. She was simply pouring out her feelings, now begging him not to come and see her ever, now telling him that she would go insane if he did not come at once and talk to her. And then, how she suffered in that letter! How every word in it revealed the fact that this apparently careless, brilliant, gay woman of the world, who seemingly did not recognize anything on heaven or on earth, outside her personality, had moments of such exquisite torture as the most devout of recluses never experience. How, notwithstanding the refined selfishness of her nature, her heart and mind were susceptible to the most merciless of introspective analysis; and how the sufferings she inflicted on herself and endured, in moments of sinister revelation of her own individuality, were a hundred fold more poignant than any chastisement which law, conventionality, and society could devise for delinquencies far greater than she even contemplated.

As he turned over the page and glanced at the tear-stained sheet and read over that melancholy outburst of hers, his heart was deeply oppressed by it and the memories it wakened in him. She spoke of a consciousness of fear, guilt, even shame. How could she endure looking Harry in the face? He was so good, so trusting, so devoted! She begged of him, if he had ever loved her, if he had ever es-

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teemed her and realized the extent of the happiness and sacrifice she made for their mutual love, to go away and never see her again. Perhaps she wouldn't survive it all, she prayed she shouldn't; it would be a satisfactory climax for everybody and everything!

Burwell did not put back that letter. He held it in his hand after he had finished reading it, his head drooping, his eyes filled with tears. He felt he could cry; he would give the world if he could cry! He lingered over those memories, they were so tender, so affecting to him! He remembered it all! He had walked about then as if in a dream, and yet his love had not been one of those where sentiment is the strongest element. But he realized that one of the most beautiful and proudest of Boston women had given herself to him, had staked so much for him. "Good God!" he exclaimed almost aloud as he sat there thinking it all over. "Is it possible that women can love one man to-day as Maud loved me and, then if another man come round more to their liking that they can throw everything to the winds, forsake their past, their all, and live happy in the pleasures of the present? Do women owe nothing to themselves? Are all women like that, and are those who do not go astray only women without hearts and souls? Oh, Maud! Maud! Maud!"

And Burwell sank down, his head in his hands, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

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It was night; stillness reigned in his rooms, silence reigned everywhere, and his sobs sounded as if they were convulsing his whole being and rending his heart.

It was several minutes before Burwell raised his head and dried his tears. He picked up the letter before him with the impulse of tearing it, but on reflection he put it in his breast pocket. The rest he replaced as he had found them, and said to himself that to-morrow he would make a bonfire of them. He felt lighter, freer; on the whole, more cheerful. The heavy clouded sensation which oppressed him had been dissipated by his tears, and a vague outline of plans and projects insinuated even a hope into his morbid feelings. At all events he would go and call on Maud to-morrow.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

MISS PRESCOTT'S AFTERNOON TEA.

A couple of days after that locket scene, Trench was sitting and chatting with Miss Prescott in her little sitting-room off the parlor. They were alone for the present. It was in the afternoon, and Miss Prescott stayed in the house because it was her "at home" day and she might have some callers. Mrs. Prescott had come in and gone out; the mother was somewhat of an invalid, and spring weather never agreed with her particularly, besides, she did not feel in that well disposed humor when the entertaining of company held out a particular attraction to her.

"It is very kind of all of you, Miss Prescott, I am sure," Trench was saying as he half reclined on the couch opposite Miss Prescott, "but I hardly know my plans yet. I feel, I really ought to go back to England by the first steamer, and yet, I am beginning to doubt whether I'll ever see England again."

"If you find Boston so attractive now, you'll be truly charmed with us, if you stay the summer with us at Nahant," said Miss Prescott, smilingly.

"I could not be more so; as it is, I assure you, that is just where the trouble lies, Miss Prescott."

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"How, Mr. Trench?"

"That I find Boston so fascinating and I don't know how to tear myself away from it."

"What do you like best about Boston—the Common, Mr. Trench?" asked Miss Prescott slyly, as she got up and began to make the tea.

"No, I imagine it is the exceptional, though you are all very lovely, Miss Prescott!"

"Thanks, Mr. Trench! If there is anything that pleases me very much it is to come in for a share in a general compliment; there is such a wealth of generosity about that sort of thing, isn't there? And if there is anything I admire in Englishmen, it is their frankness."

"Thanks, Miss Prescott!" he said, imitating the tone of her voice when she expressed her gratitude. "Only the reason I never make compliments to particular people is because—"

"Oh, please don't make it worse by explaining matters."

"Oh, no, not at all! What I was going to say was: that lovely women, particularly American women, are so well aware of their loveliness that to tell them so would seem like painting the lily, and that sort of thing."

"There it is! I knew you would go and spoil what you said before! Here you are saying that American women are all conscious and conceited, and what not! Oh, Mr. Trench!"

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"Oh, well, it's no use attempting to defend myself against such accusations. I would think it unkind, if I thought you believed in what you said."

"There you go again! American women don't even believe in what they say themselves! I can imagine it printed, I can even see it on the exact page of the book; it will be on the 163 page in that chapter about 'The Women of the Hub' or 'Bostonian Beauties.' By the way, have you began to write that book yet?"

"What book?"

"Your book on America! Every one writes that sort of thing nowadays, and I am just dying to see what you'll say about us. Mr. Burwell said the other day that you were going to name it the 'Mysteries of the Hub,' it is such a fascinating title!"

"Mr. Burwell is very kind! I know if I were contemplating such a work, it would pay me to employ him as my advance sale agent! The book would surely make a hit then!"

Miss Prescott glanced sharply at him and, as if convinced of something, she said with less asperity in her tone:

"Then you are really not going to write any such book about Boston, as Mr. Burwell said? Thank you ever so much; you don't know how glad I am, and you'll excuse me, won't you, for thinking you would do it?"

Miss Prescott's face was slightly flushed as she

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said that, and Trench, who was looking at her, could not explain it all to himself, so he said:

"Miss Prescott, may I know what made you speak so, and what made you think so?"

"Oh nothing! Only I heard some people speak on the subject, and somebody said that you intended to sneer and laugh at everything you have seen here. Mrs. Drayton denied any such intentions on your part, but Mrs. Sampson insisted on it, and said that Mr. Burwell had even seen a portion of the manuscript, and it was dreadful! We intended to ask Mrs. St. John to dissuade you from doing it, but Willie laughed at us!"

"Why Mrs. St. John? Did you think your request wouldn't have been enough if I ever thought of doing such a thing?"

"It is good of you to say so! Only I remembered that when our influence failed, Mrs. St. John's persuasion was more effective. I am very glad there was somebody or something that could make you stay here, only we are all jealous of Mrs. St. John!"

"It seems to me," Trench remarked after a minute or two of silence, "that Mr. Burwell talks too much. I am afraid if I wrote a book on Boston I should say that while Boston women were angels in perfection, the men would bear a little improving."

"Yes, Mr. Trench. And now we are talking about it, will you tell me what was really the matter that night? That is, if I am not asking too much of

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you, and if you feel you could trust me. You know, everybody is talking about it more or less, and there is a general doubt as to your explanation of the matter. You have had some trouble with Mr. Burwell, have you not?"

Trench sat up straight, and said impressively:

"That I could trust you, Miss Prescott, I know you would not doubt me if I said that the utmost of my secrets would be placed in your confidence, if you desired them. But I have promised never to say a word on the subject and, I know you would prefer me to keep my promise rather than satisfy your curiosity."

"Thank you, Mr. Trench! Only it was not mere curiosity, I assure you! Mrs. St. John and I were laughing over the matter a couple of days ago, but, since then, there has been general talk about it, and I hate to have my friends talked of unpleasantly. I asked Willie about it the other day when Mrs. Sampson was here; we both plied him as hard as we could, but you know Willie; he kept telling us all sorts of wonderful stories, how you each plucked up a tree from the common and hurled it at one another, and how you scalped his head with the trunk of it, and how somebody's cut a wound on your forehead; that's all the satisfaction we could get from him!" and Miss Prescott glanced at Trench's scar and smiled pleasantly, while Trench could not refrain from laughing at the ludicrous

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suggestion, her recital of her brother's account of the affair, brought up to his imagination.

Their conversation was soon interrupted by the announcement and entrance of Mrs. Drayton, whom Miss Prescott hastened to inform that they were both right in denying Mr. Trench's intention of writing a book on Boston, upon which Mrs. Drayton remarked that it was all that crazy man's stories, and suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, Mary! but did you find out from Mr. Trench all about that dreadful fight they had that night? Tell it all again, Mr. Trench, won't you?—Only one lump, if you please?" she added, as Trench assisted her to sugar.

"Oh, wait till the winter comes!" he said. "When we can all sit round the fire and listen to the winds howl outside, and the windows and doors rattle as if they were really shaken by an intrusion of violent ghosts! Your room will do excellently, it's so exposed to the river, Mrs. Drayton; then I will tell you the whole tale of horror—not till then, it would lose all its charm at a tea-table! If you please—no lemon, thank you! You know, Mrs. Drayton, it was awfully kind of you to come when you did; I was dying for a cup of tea, and did not dare to ask for it from Miss Prescott."

"Oh, men are all weird creatures!" remarked Mrs. Drayton, and then turning to Miss Prescott she said:

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"You know I have got a fascinating idea; I am going to give a Kettledrum Party."

"Won't that be fun!" ejaculated Miss Prescott. "How many invitations are you going to send out?"

"A thousand! I have got to send them to a lot of bores I know won't come!"

"Mercy on us, a thousand invitations!" exclaimed Trench. "And how many do you expect will come?"

"Oh, a couple of hundred or so, and I want you to help me pour out tea, Mary. Mrs. St. John promised, too, and I am going to ask several others; and, by the way, are you going to-morrow on that coach-ride?"

"Mrs. St. John kindly asked us all, and we have all accepted;" replied Miss Prescott. "You are coming, aren't you, Mr. Trench?"

"I believe you were kind enough to accept the invitation for me, weren't you? Let me pass your cup, Mrs. Drayton."

But at this moment the servant entered the room and handed Trench a card. He picked it up, looked at it frowningly, and passing it to Miss Prescott, he said: "Do you know who that can be?"

"Mr. James Noyse, Boston Howler," she read aloud. "I am sure I don't know the gentleman! Did you ask him what he wants, John?"

"Yessem! He said he wanted to see Mr. Trench; he was sent up from the paper to see him on a very important matter, Ma'am!"

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"Tell him I don't know any gentleman by the name of James Noyse, and that I have no important matters which I want to talk to him about!"

"Hold on, hold on!" cried Prescott, entering the room at that moment. "How do you do, Mrs. Drayton? I just saw that young man downstairs, and he wants an interview with you. You'd better be careful, my dear fellow, our papers are not the harmless playthings they are in Europe; you'd better see him and tell him you have nothing to say on the subject!"

"I don't see why I should see him at all!" persisted Trench.

"Oh, nonsense! it won't do you any harm seeing him. Come, I'll go down with you!"

The two men left the ladies in an excited state of curiosity. Mrs. Drayton kept repeating that it was quite wild, and Mrs. Sampson, who entered the room a minute later, forgot all about the news she was going to surprise them with, that she was going to Europe, when she was apprised of what was going on downstairs.

"What do you think could be the matter?" asked Mrs. Drayton.

"I suppose it's about the same affair, that fight they had on the Common that night. Count de Holtz says," said Mrs. Sampson, "that he is going to have that as one of the illustrations in his book about America. He is going to call it, 'How the Boston nobility settle their romantic difficulties.' Probably

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they are interviewing Mr. Trench on the subject of his book;—the Count had an interview about his work—did you see it?"

"Yes, it was rather hard on the poor Count!" replied Miss Prescott.

"And did you hear the shocking thing that nasty New York paper had about all of us and the Count the other day?" asked Mrs. Sampson.

"Yes, wasn't it dreadful?" said Mrs. Drayton laughing.

"Who do you think writes them all?" Mrs. Sampson persisted.

"Oh, I don't know!" replied Mrs. Drayton, still laughing heartily at it. "I suppose some of those newspaper wretches. Here they are! Tell us all about it, Mr. Trench! Are they going to have a great sensation about you in the papers?"

"Tremendous!" replied Prescott. "Why, they think, the newspapers do, that the whole Back Bay is going to be shaken up with a scandal of which we are the *dramatis personæ*. We are all in it, my dears! Give me a cup of tea, Mary!"

"Don't be silly and tell us all about it," said Mrs. Drayton.

"Do tell us what they asked you!" urged Mrs. Sampson.

"Please, Mr. Trench, what was it?" asked Miss Prescott, handing her brother a cup of tea. "You see we are all dying of curiosity."

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"I don't know myself, or I would tell you!" answered Trench. "I only know the man began to ask me some impudent questions, and I told him that I had nothing to say on the subject. He wanted to know where I came from and where I'll go to, what I was doing now and what I had been doing all my lifetime; and he said he was especially anxious to find out the truth of the whole matter of that night, and who in particular the lady was in question."

"And what did you say?" asked a chorus of voices.

"I replied with one of those phrases which a man of the world always has conveniently at his disposal!" said Trench, taking another cup of tea from Miss Prescott.

"He said he'll be damned if he ever heard of such a thing!" said Prescott *sotto voce* to Mrs. Drayton, at which they all laughed, and Trench continued. "And I would have thrown him out of doors had not Prescott smiled blandly and told him that I had nothing to say on the subject."

"Is that all?" they asked. "And what are they going to print about you?"

"To print about me? I don't know that they are going to print anything. They certainly have not got anything from me!" replied Trench emphatically.

Prescott smiled.

"Well, wait and you'll see. The man told me

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they were going to run a sketch of your whole life in Europe; oh, don't be scared, my dear fellow, they don't know anything, only that you are an English politician and somebody in particular, that's all."

"My whole life?" exclaimed Trench. "Well, what in thunder do they want of my whole life? I beg your pardon!" he said, turning to the ladies, "only I don't understand it all yet, not quite. *Apropos* of what do they publish my life in a Boston newspaper?"

"Oh, you English simpleton, you! Why, does your modesty prevent you from appreciating the fact that you are an important personage here? Did you ever hear of such obtuse men as the English?" he asked, turning to Mrs. Sampson. "And besides that, why the rumors of last week are enough to exalt you into a tremendous importance in the estimation of the press. You are talked about, don't you see? There are rumors of a scandal, of a Back Bay scandal; you don't realize the delicious material for a sensation that word alone suggests to an American newspaper man! Think of it! A real lady, a fight on the Common, a dark night, an Englishman —and all enveloped in fashionable mystery! If you can't see material there for a page of stuff and a month of publications, you must come from the backwoods. I am sure they'll have all the bulletins to-morrow announcing the whole discovery to have been found out at last."

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"Oh no, Willie! Don't mind him, Mr. Trench," the ladies kept urging, when Mrs. Sampson recollected that she had to make a few more calls, which reminded Mrs. Drayton that she had to go home and dress for dinner.

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CHAPTER XXX.

BURWELL'S APPEAL TO MAUD.

Having resolved to see Maud, Burwell kept reciting to himself the probabilities of the conversations which were going to take place between them. He was going to plead with her; at least, he was going to force her to a confession of some kind; he was determined to make her either deny or affirm, with her own lips, his doubts and suspicions.

Burwell knew the routine of the St. John household so well that he could calculate, almost, with precision on the exact time Maud would be at home, and when nobody would be there to disturb his tete-a-tete with her. He thought of the possibility of Trench's presence there, but he resolved to hazard that; at all events, he made up his mind, even if the latter were there, to make a friendly call, and to act toward Maud as if nothing had happened to interrupt their former relations.

It was not without a certain grim sense of humor that he revolved these thoughts in his mind, and he almost smiled as he ascended the steps, thinking: "'Twould be quite a charity to make the other fellow smart in the way I am afflicted. There is

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not half the fun in letting one's rival play the game without your taking part in it. Is Mrs. St. John at home?" he asked, aloud, as the servant opened the door to him. "Will you please tell her, then, that Mr. Burwell is here, and ask whether she can see him?"

"Yes, sir!" said the man, with a queer look on his stolid face, as if to say that there were some things in the world which even passed Patrick's comprehension; while Burwell, who remained standing in the hall, felt suddenly careless—almost reckless—a cheerful sensation taking hold of him, as if, after all, he was not going to bother very much over things that couldn't be helped.

"Won't you step up, please, into the boudoir?" the man said, coming down. "The madame will be down directly."

Burwell ran upstairs and sat down, with his hat in his hand and his cane beside him. Strange, how he did not feel at home there! He looked round the room as if it had been a place he was just observing for the first time, instead, as he suddenly thought, that he might be surveying it for the last time. His thoughts were too tumultuous to permit him to dwell on recollections; his feelings too alarmed to allow him the indulgence in morbidly contrasting memories.

Suddenly he heard the rustling of a dress, and the next moment he was standing up, facing Maud.

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Maud as she swept into the room stood reserved, cold, looking somewhat pale but, the whole outline of her face animated with a superb hauteur that betokened to him some inward agitation of which his presence was the direct cause.

"You are quite a stranger!" she said coldly. "How do you do? Sit down, please."

Burwell sat down on the sofa, while Maud drew her chair near the fire. Burwell knew that if he did not begin to talk at once on the subject he purposely came here for, he would go away without having said a word. He felt himself getting pale, his courage was rapidly deserting him, something was forcing itself to his mind, but he did not know how to begin, and yet the opportunity was fast ebbing away from him.

"Maud," he said without having gained complete control of his voice yet. "Maud! I came to ask you something."

"What is it?" she asked without turning round; she was bending her head more toward the fire.

"I want to know what you are going to do, how you are going to end all this?"

"What I am going to do, and how I am going to end all this?" she asked in mild astonishment. "I really don't quite understand you. What is it you want to know?"

"Oh, you know pretty well what I mean without my specifying things in exact questions. I want to

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know what you are going to do with that man, and what is going to become of all of us?"

"Really, you amuse me. I suppose you'll all go to thunder, if you please; and, as for myself, when I want you for my confessor, I will send for you."

Burwell winced. He was silent for a moment or two, and then said, looking straight at her:

"Maud, it was not so very long ago when you used to confess to me more than you even dreamed of telling to yourself."

"I know it, much to my sorrow."

"To your sorrow, Maud?" asked Burwell in genuine surprise.

"Yes, to my deep regret. I should have known better, I should not have been such a fool as to have trusted in you."

"Not trusted in me? Why? What have I done to you?"

Maud sniffed impatiently, and drummed her foot.

"Oh, nonsense!" she exclaimed in a tone of disgust. "You know, better than I do, what you have done to make me regret all that I have done for your sake, all that I have ever felt for you."

"I, Maud?" asked Burwell in utter astonishment, pointing his finger to his breast, his neck craned as if stretched to perceive some explanation somewhere.

"Yes, you!" she exclaimed emphatically. "What is the use of your pretending like this? I know everything, I know all about your action on that night."

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"So that cur has told it to you all, has he?" asked Burwell angrily. "And he gave me his word he wouldn't!" he added contemptuously.

"I don't know to whom you are referring by that courteous name, only if you mean Mr. Trench, I assure you he is incapable of such an indelicacy as you accuse him of!"

"I beg your pardon! I forgot that I was offending your honor by reflecting on his honesty. Still, there was nobody present and nobody could have overheard us. Did you hear it all from the Prescotts?"

"No! I assure you the Prescotts don't know anything about it beyond what they suspect! Mr. Trench would rather let his head be cut off than tell them a single thing about it!"

"Did you try it?"

"What?"

"To cut off his head?"

She did not reply; she turned away from him and looked steadily into the fire.

"Still," she said after a while, "you admit, then, having stood and watched this house and watched Mr. Trench's going and coming? Wasn't it a gentlemanly action on your part? What did you imagine people would think, Mr. Trench would think on finding you in the middle of the night standing and watching the house? It was a most delicate attention on your part, there is no doubt! And you professed to love me once, to respect me, to be ready

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to lay down your life and what not for my sake, great heavens!"

"Oh, Maud, I couldn't help it, I really couldn't!" said Burwell piteously "What could I do? Say yourself what you would have done in my place?"

"I certainly wouldn't have stood by your door watching!" she said calmly.

"But I was mad; I didn't know what I was doing! You think it was all the result of a moment's jealousy? You think it was the simple impulse of a mad suspicion?"

"It was certainly not the act of a gentleman, I know that!" she interrupted quietly.

"But I was mad, Maud, I was mad, distracted, crazy with despair and doubts! Can't you understand? Don't you realize how I have suffered? I have kept it all to myself, but do you think it is an easy matter for a man to stand by and see the woman in whom his whole life, his whole being is wrapped up, deliberately taken away from him without a moment's warning?"

"Taken away?" she exclaimed, turning round quickly and arresting the torrent of his passionate ebullition. "Do you think that I can be taken and retaken, and that it only depends on one's letting me go and the other's willingness to take me?"

But Burwell did not take any notice of her interruption.

"I don't care!" he cried, jumping up from his

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seat. "I don't care what you say now, but you were knit to me, body and soul, and I have felt, ever since you met that man, that you were being torn away from me, and that you were getting more and more distant from me! How could I help watching? How could I help observing? Do you think it was all a pleasure to me, eh? Do you think it was a satisfaction to me to perceive an indifference in your features where, on meeting me before, there danced love and happiness and such a world of gladness, Maud? Do you think it was a pleasure to me to see that indifference turn into impatience, that impatience drift into dislike? I saw every change, I detected every transition, I thought my heart would break, but I bore it quietly and tried to repress every impulse by acting differently! What should I have done? Oh, God! If you knew how I felt when I realized that your pleasant, familiar manner to me was a conscious strain, a disagreeable affectation to you—if you only knew! And, then, that day I discovered that ring on your finger, and those other rings scattered here! I pretended I didn't mind; I pretended I did not notice anything, but you know that I must have known what it all meant, that I must have realized what it all signified to me! Good God, Maud! Don't you know what suffering is, how much a man can suffer during a whole lifetime of misery? It seemed as if I experienced it all on that day, as if it were all crowded into that mo-

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ment! If you ever loved, Maud, as I do you, if you love now with that love, you will understand—"

"You promised me never to speak of love!" she said, rising suddenly from her chair with blanched face and feverish eyes.

"Don't remind me of promises, Maud!" he said hastily, feeling almost dizzy with the wave of anger which swept over his emotions. "I am not pleading my love to you! I know once you have discarded it you will never take it back to yourself! I have not come for that. I have come to ask you to have pity on us all, on Harry, your children, and myself! I will not intrude my affections on you, only tell me that it is not your love for another man which has made you act like that toward me for the last few weeks; only tell me that, and I will go away satisfied and promise to do anything you want me to do!"

Maud sat down again in her chair, and sat now with her head drooping on her breast, looking pale, sorrowful and agitated. A terrible struggle was convulsing her inward soul; a terrible conflict was agitating her. She wavered.

"You are silent, Maud; how shall I interpret it?"

She did not move, she did not stir. She kept sitting there in the same drooping attitude. "If I could only bring myself to tell him that, she thought!"

"I know you will always be frank with me, Maud!" he said suddenly, as if apprehending her

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thoughts. "I know you have too much goodness in your heart to deceive me. You can trust me, only tell me that and I will go away!"

"I wish I could, Frank!" came like a moan from her. "I wish I could!"

Burwell felt for a moment the floor whirl under his feet. There was darkness, but he recovered at once. He stood for a second or two swallowing heavy lumps, and when he was conscious of the firmness of his voice he said:

"At least, you will do this, Maud! Oh, I don't know how I am talking; I don't know what I am asking, but I can't let it all go as it is! You have got a memory, Maud; you have got a heart and feelings and kindness in you! Won't you try to have some pity on me? Please, Maud, have some pity on yourself! Look! I will go to the end of the world for you, do everything you want me to; I will never come near you again if you will only promise me that you will have some compassion on everybody! Please, Maud, spare your children, for their sake! Oh, God! for the sake of your own womanhood, save us all from that misery!"

"What can I do? What do you want me to do, Frank?" she asked, jumping up and speaking earnestly and eagerly, with tears in her eyes.

"Promise me that your love for that man won't lead you to abandon everybody and everything! Promise me that you will be faithful to yourself!

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Promise me that you will save me from the humiliation of seeing you that man's mistress! God, I shall not endure it—I cannot stand it! See,—Maud!" he exclaimed, as if a sudden idea had illuminated his intelligence. "See! you know how I love you and how my whole life depends on you! See, it's four o'clock now. I promise you that by seven o'clock this evening I will have left Boston, never to return to it only with your permission, never to see you again, never to say a word on the subject of our past, if you'll only promise me to give up that man!"

Maud sank back in her chair. Tears started from her eyes and began streaming down her cheeks. She sat there drooping, looking the picture of forlornness and helplessness. Sobs began to convulse her breast, while Burwell stood looking on and expectant.

"Can't you do this much for the sake of all of us?" he pleaded again.

"Oh, I am the wretchedest human being!" she groaned. "I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do! What right have you to ask of me sacrifices?" she said suddenly, almost with a fierceness in her tone.

"It does not seem much, for all that I am ready to give up for your sake, Maud. Is his love dearer to you than all our lives, than your own happiness? Your love to him cannot be much, if he knew all, if you told him everything. He may deceive you and

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you may deceive him, and you both might be deceived for a time. But one's happiness cannot be lasting if based on another's misery. It will all ebb away, the dream will; the romance will pass away and leave nothing but regret and shame! I am pleading not for myself, I am pleading by the right of our past. Come, Maud, in memory of our love! Come, only promise me that you will never see him again, that you will never let him come near you."

"I cannot, Frank! I wish I could, but I cannot!" came in a feeble moan from her.

Burwell stood dazed for a moment. He looked at her strangely, he tried to say something but his voice refused utterance and, the next moment, he rushed out of the room.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

THE NEWSPAPER AT BREAKFAST.

The day after the reporter called, at a comparatively early hour in the morning, before Trench was dressed yet, Prescott knocked at his room and came in, holding a paper in his hand, laughing and saying: "Well, my dear fellow, you can repeat with Byron now, that you woke one morning and found yourself famous. Here's the Howler having a column and a half of stuff about you that might make interesting reading, all over the country. I sent out for it; I knew they would have something or other about you;" and he handed him the paper.

Trench glanced at the article, smiled and frowned alternately as he was reading it, and said as he laid it down: "Gad, I would like to twist the man's neck who first instigated it."

"My dear fellow, I assure you, 'twas no ill will on any man's part against you; this isn't a single man's work, it's simply a characteristic enterprise of our newspapers."

"Your newspapers be damned," exclaimed Trench energetically; "I suppose this will be copied all over the country, will reach England, and there will be the devil of a row all over."

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"I suppose there will," assented Prescott complacently.

"What in thunder are you grinning at? You seem to think it a capital joke to have one's friends written about like that, don't you?"

"Yes, if they take on so much about it. The country would be a vast wilderness, in a week, if we were all so sensitive about what American newspapers say about us. Why, my dear fellow, I am sure there are hundreds of men in this very town who would give the world to have themselves written about. The best advertisement one can have; your name will be known all over the country."

"The best advertisement one could have?" asked Trench fiercely; "I don't want any advertisement of that kind; I have no intention of running for the Presidency. I don't care a straw what they say or write about me, but don't you see these damn insinuations, these suggestions about a scandal here and there and the pointing to a limited group, the woman they are aiming at, would not be difficult to be picked out? It's only a confounded cad that could have written it, and if I knew for certain that it was the man I suspect, I would thrash him within an inch of his life."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"Whom? Of course, that man Burwell."

"Oh, nonsense! Don't be such a fool as to let your prejudices run away with your better judg-

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ment. Burwell would no more do such a thing than I would forge a cheque."

"Still, it's his paper."

"Yes, but he has only got a financial interest in it, and has nothing to do with its management. Why, we guy the life out of him sometimes, when the Howler attempts to write something smart about society, and accuse him of writing their fashion notes and what not. Besides, it's all imagination on your part. The suggestions of a lady's name and the insinuation of the society scandal is the indispensable color which every newspaper would employ to dress up an article. You know what it is; you do it in England, also, and nobody suspects anything or tries to make anything out of their suspicions. Why, I myself don't know whom they are driving at; and unless it is Mrs. St. John, for the life of me I couldn't surmise whom they mean! The rest is deuced complimentary. Come; aren't you ready yet? Mother and Mary are waiting breakfast for us."

When the two young men came down, the ladies met Mr. Trench with sympathetic smiles and, during breakfast, they indulged in a great number of pleasantries on the subject of the newspaper article. Miss Prescott, though, said she was sorry, and was somewhat indignant at the newspapers for not letting him alone.

"Let him alone!" exclaimed her brother; "why, they are only beginning to have fun with him!

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Trench may expect a dozen reporters between this and noontime, all of whom will come to elucidate the denials or to discover the clew to that mysterious lady. Who is she, Mary; do you know? He wouldn't tell me anything about her; but if you find out something, send it up to Burwell, and he will see that it is in time for their evening edition. You may bless your stars, though," he said, turning to Trench, "that you are in Boston, and that it is not New York or Chicago that first started this thing!"

"I have always doubted what it was I ought to feel for being here," replied Trench. "Now I know it! I knew a man once at college whose religious views were somewhat cloudy on the subject of the future life, and he said he supposed the only thing he could imagine could make him reconciled to heaven, when he got there, would be the realization that he was not in the other place!—No, thank you; nothing more."

They were through breakfast, and when Prescott stood up to go, Trench said he would accompany him to the office. They were all going to lunch at the St. Johns' at one, and they said they would both be back by half past twelve. Prescott had little to do at his office. There was a contractor coming, and he had to explain to him a design; that was all.

"You must not worry in the least about it, Mr. Trench," said Miss Prescott, as she came out into

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the hall to see them off; "I shall be very unhappy if you do!"

"You may be sure I won't, then; it is very kind of you, Miss Prescott; good-bye!"

But they had not opened the door yet when the bell rang, and Prescott, who answered it, was heard to exclaim:

"Why, my dear fellow! How are you? Come in!"

"No, thank you; I am going to the office, and I stopped on my way. How do you do, Mr. Trench? How are you, Mary?"

It was St. John who was standing at the door, and who stepped in, for a moment, into the hallway.

"I just stopped on my way," he said, "to tell you, Mr. Trench, how sorry Mrs. St. John and I are for the annoyance to which you are exposed. It must be very intolerable, and it is too bad! I trust you won't feel so badly yourself, and be charitable. It is all a piece of impudent journalism; that is all, Mr. Trench, and we all wish it could have been prevented."

"It is very kind of you," replied Trench, "and I am sure I won't mind what the newspapers say about me, so long as I have so many friends to feel for me."

"On the contrary, St. John, we rather like it," observed Prescott.

"Well, you deserve it, Willie; I think a good roasting in the newspapers would do you good," said St. John.

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"Yes, it might teach him a little more sympathy," commented his sister.

"No, a good roasting would do for me what it does for other geese; it would make me ready for the highest office in the country!" replied Prescott.

"Oh, well, he is the same incorrigible ninepence that he always was!" remarked St. John. "Were you going out, gentlemen? We'll have a delightful day for coaching; it feels quite summer in the air. Good-bye, Mary; you are looking lovely this morning. How is Mrs. Prescott? Oh, by the way, Mr. Trench, I have got a note for you; I nearly forgot all about it, the dunderhead that I am! Maud says I have missed my vocation; I should have been a bishop, I have got such a marvelous way of forgetting the things that I ought to have done."

Trench took the note, excused himself, opened it and glanced over it.

"*My darling,*" *it read,* "*I am sorry, and I am so miserable! You won't mind this nasty talk in the paper, will you? I don't! Oh, I am just longing to see you, and will expect you at eleven.*"

Trench felt rather uncomfortable; he felt even the warmth of a blush suffusing his cheeks, when he stood there, reading that note which was brought by her husband, and which he read in his presence. A nervous smile flitted over his features as he turned to Miss Prescott and said:

"Will you excuse me if I don't come back at

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half-past twelve? Mrs. St. John is kind enough to ask me to escort her shopping for an hour.

It was strange how awkward he felt when he was saying it, and how embarrassed he was when he was looking into her face. Miss Prescott smiled, and said, "Certainly," and held out her hand frankly to him; but he noticed a shadow chasing across her features and mingling with the light that danced in her eyes.

He felt, when he left in company with the other two men, that he had to simulate something before her, and that, somehow, he was very dissatisfied with himself.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

A LONE REVEL IN THE BOUDOIR.

The most insignificant present event is always overwhelmingly more important than the paramount past, and it was emphatically so to Maud. The solemn thoughts, the tormenting reflections which had kept agitating her ever since Burwell called last, and the apprehensions which kept her in a restlessly disturbed state all the while, paled, dwindled, almost vanished before the pleasurable zest which the coaching party held out to her. And though, when Trench first entered the room she threw herself into his arms with a nervous, almost hysterical impulse, kissing him as if she were more conscious of a personal trouble than a passionate affection—it only required a few minutes of his quieting influence to make her forget everything that had happened in the past and everything that might threaten in the future.

"Never mind, darling!" she kept saying. "It is all his doings, I know it is! But you don't mind, you won't mind? I love you so much!"

"How do you know it is Burwell?" he asked.

"Oh, I know; he was here the other day. It was quite sad, how he talked! But I told him it was no

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use. You don't mind, you are not worried over what the newspapers say? Please, darling, don't!" as she kissed his lips.

"Oh, I don't mind in the least personally," he replied, "it is only you that I care about. I should have thought him possessed of more manly instincts than to drag your name into the affair."

"But my name isn't in it, is it?"

"No; but everybody of course knows to whom reference is made. I am so sorry, love."

"Oh, I don't care what they say about me;—love me, darling! I have been so miserable without you all day yesterday; I very nearly sent for you; and, you know, I got scared blue when Harry brought up the paper in the morning and told me there was quite a piece about you. He is furious and wrote that man Burwell a terrible note about it."

"Does he believe that it is Burwell who is at the bottom of all this?"

"No, not exactly that; but he knows that he could have prevented it, and he had asked him to do so, the other day. You won't worry, will you? I almost wish I had let you go at that time when you came to tell me you were returning to Europe. I would have saved you from all this trouble."

"Do you regret my staying here?"

"Do I regret your staying here? Why, my darling!" And she threw her arms around him and kissed him impetuously.

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"I wish I could go away with you now," she said, releasing him from her embrace and sitting back to look at him. "I wish I could go away from all this world here, and all my past there, and never return and see anybody, or hear anything of them again. Do you know where I should like to go?"

"Where, my love?"

"To India—no, to Japan; somewhere where we could both be all the time together, with lots of flowers around us, and beautiful palm trees over us, and out in the warm air—with those fascinating little houses they have there—wouldn't we be happy, darling? I was thinking of it all last night. You know baby was very sick and kept me awake—I could hear him cry the whole night, and I kept thinking of it all the time. And, perhaps, we can be happy like this some time!"

Trench did not reply; he drew near her and kissed her silently.

"Poor you;" he said soothingly, "how you must have suffered! What is the matter with your baby?"

"Oh I don't know, I suppose teeth; they are so weird. I often think I should like to have been a nun—it must be so peaceful and quiet—there must be such a repose to one's whole soul in a cloister or a nunnery! That's what I should have been, where they should have kept me. I would have been so much happier myself, and so many people would have been so much happier for it, too! What is the

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use of my living like this? I seem to have been born only to make everybody else miserable."

Her transition from the gay to the melancholy moods was so rapid, that Trench felt his sympathies could hardly follow her.

"You must not be so despondent, darling;" he said quietly; "you must not give in to such morbid feelings about yourself; you have made people happier than you could ever be yourself."

"Oh, no, no! They are all miserable through me;" she said plaintively; "my love has never brought any happiness to anybody, and, unless some day to be very miserable myself, I don't know what I am living for. You know I get so tired sometimes going from dinners to parties, from parties to dinners, and that sort of thing. It all becomes so very monotonous to go here and there, and dance, and laugh and pretend to enjoy yourself with nonsense; it is such a bore sometimes, when you stop to think. I wish I had some intellect!" she said, with sudden impetus. "Wouldn't it have been fascinating if I had a genius for writing, or painting, or music? Mr. Drayton says music makes a man the happiest of all, and I could do all this even if I get old, even if I were all alone in the world, and had nobody to love me."

"My darling, what makes you talk so? What makes you feel so? *You* get old!" and he kissed her.

"Oh, yes; I shall get old very soon. Everybody

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must get old some time; it's such a weary world! You know, I sometimes feel jealous of Nina; I know it's dreadful, but when I think that she'll be pretty and young, and lovely when I'll be old and weazened, I sometimes feel sorry I ever had a daughter."

"You must not, love! You must not let your thoughts run away with your feelings like that! You are still young, and life is lovely, and happiness is before you. Gracious! if I were a woman, and so beautiful as you are, I would see the world young in my most fading years, and not let a day's pleasure pass of the present for fear of finding anything that might pain me in the future."

"Life *is* lovely!" she exclaimed with a sudden, buoyant eagerness in her voice, her eyes lustrous with the vision that was animating her imagination then. "Isn't it beautiful?" she cried, with a gesture of her hands which might have expressed a child's delight. "I don't know why I should ever be miserable, even a moment, do you? Oh, I hate to be unhappy! Why should I care how things go, what people think? I am beautiful, am I not? You think so, don't you, love? Look!"and she extended her arms and rested her hands on his shoulders. "Don't you think I am very lovely? My form cannot shrink very, very much, can it, darling? Oh, it will be quite an age before I begin to look old, before you cease to love me. And the world is very lovely where we are! And it is so pleasant to go into a very brilliant

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room with everything that is beautiful around you, and everybody who is great to meet you, and to be looked upon and admired, isn't it?—and to feel that it is so good to be happy!" she exclaimed in a tremulous voice; but her face was all radiant, was all flushed, and her eyes were liquid, and she seemed almost overcome with the picture of happiness which she conjured up, and to which she wholly abandoned herself.

"Why, my love," exclaimed Trench, smiling happily at her. "What is the matter with you to-day?"

"Oh, nothing;" she said, bending her head on his breast, "only I want to be happy; please let me be happy!"

But she soon jumped up; there was a knock at the door and she ran out into the boudoir, and brought back Nina who had come down to tell her that she had returned from a walk.

Maud led her up to the sofa and kept her by her side. Nina looked strikingly pretty and her lovely eyes kept roaming over Trench, whom she had greeted with a piquant, "How do you do?" Nina was quite excited. While she was out walking she had met "Cousin Burwell," who took her into a store and bought her this;—and she showed a box full of candy. And now she came to know whether she may keep it and whether she may have some of it, as nurse said she didn't think she would be allowed to eat the candy. Nina talked as if she were very much

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aggrieved. "A little at a time, Nina; a very little at a time, dear," said Maud, looking lovingly at her daughter.

"Papa said candy was vewy good for me," pleaded Nina.

"Yes, Nina; only you must not eat it all at once, or it will make you sick like your baby brother."

"Can't baby have some candy, mamma?"

"No, dear," replied Maud, smoothing her hair; and when Nina started to go, she caught her up in her arms and kissed her, and held her up to Trench, saying: "Isn't my daughter pretty? Isn't she going to be chic when she grows up, with these laughing large eyes of hers and these thick eyelashes, and that complexion?

And she pressed her fingers on the child's cheek which imprinted white marks for a minute or two.

"She will be as fascinating as her mother," replied Trench, not knowing exactly what to say at that moment.

As soon as Nina left the room, Maud walked up to him and said: "You see what makes me hesitate to go away with you! What would you not do for such a child if she were yours?"

Before he had time to reply the guests of the coaching party began to arrive, and Maud ran upstairs to make herself ready to receive them.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE COACHING PARTY.

It was a perfect day for coaching. They started from the St. John's residence when the sky was clear, and the sun was shining and diffusing a delicious warmth in the air. As soon as they drove out into the outskirts of Boston, the company, as if affected by the buoyant, vivifying spirit with which the spring air was pregnant, abandoned themselves to a pleasurable time. How they talked and laughed and enjoyed themselves with everything they met and saw! And then, Trench became the object of their merriment and they all began to tease him about that newspaper article, about his antecedents and what not.

"What about that lady? Who was she?" they all asked, Maud, the most persistent amongst them. Mrs. Sampson suggested that it was not a proper subject for light conversation. Mrs. Drayton, on the contrary, said it was a pity there was not going to be anything more in the newspapers; she was dying to read some sensation. Boston had been so beastly dull of late.

Prescott replied that it did not take much to make it very lively; that, in fact, he was always ready

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to sacrifice himself for the general good, and whenever Mrs. Drayton felt dull she need only come and elope with him. Mrs. Drayton retorted that she did not want to escape from dullness in order to be bored to death—upon which everybody laughed—or, at least, those who were within the range of hearing it.

St. John, who sat beside Miss Prescott, began to talk about going to the country. They were going to move very soon, were they? He himself did not know. Maud had not made up her mind yet whether she preferred going to Europe for the summer; she had been talking of it, but for the last few days baby had been so sick that they had given up all thoughts of doing anything for the present.

Indeed? Miss Prescott was very sorry to hear it. What was the matter? How strange! They didn't know? Poor baby! Doctors are such quacks nowadays. Whether Mr. Trench was going back to Europe? She did not know his plans—he did not know himself, she thought, she hoped he would stay with them for the summer. Mother was getting to feel somewhat better, but she would feel discontented till they went to Beverly and the weather got warmer. Yes, it's too bad about that article! Where was Mr. Burwell lately? She had not seen him for an age. He is busy—what at?

But suddenly the rest burst out into a peal of laughter, and when they looked around they saw Trench tooting on the horn. His first attempt was a failure,

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but his next effort resulted in a blast, loud, melodious and flourishing enough to attract the attention of everybody far and distant. It reminded him of the Coach-and-Meet Club in London, of which he had been a member for a year or two. He sat near Maud, and when he finished tooting she said to him in a whisper, "I wish we could drive on and on; wouldn't that be lovely if we didn't need to return?"

Maud was in splendid spirits; she talked incessantly, and made him laugh all the time. She managed to whisper to him loving things, and the next moment looked as unconcerned and as preoccupied in her conversation with Mrs. Drayton as if he had never been in existence. Nothing escaped her hearing; nothing escaped her sight, and Trench sat there, looking and talking, and wondering, all the time, whether he could ever fathom her inward nature, and whether he could ever understand her actions.

It was perfectly lovely when they were returning; the sun was already descending and changing its brilliant light to a purple radiance. The rays were writhing through a host of transparently golden cloudlets, while the sun was sinking into a bank of crimson, pink and gray clouds which were lowering on the horizon, and forming themselves in a compact mass.

When Maud jumped down and went into the hall she picked up a letter from the table, which evidently had been left there. All those of the party

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were going to stay to dinner; the ladies were invited by Maud to go upstairs with her, while St. John led Prescott and Trench to his rooms.

Trench was the first to come down. He went into the boudoir and thence in the ante-room, and sat down there on the seat by the window. It was a glorious view that presented itself to his sight. The river lay calm and unruffled, reflecting the hundreds of shades and colors of the heavens. The sky was covered with scattering, fleecy clouds, the straggling pieces of which looked liked translucently liquid gold, while over the whole horizon a mass of purple colors mingled with crimson shades, the edges of which were one glowing red. And all this kept moving slowly and mysteriously, and changing gradually, but perceptibly, and transmogoeia upon transmogoeia kept appearing and disappearing as if all were wrought by some mysterious power, the magic force of which pervaded the whole of creation.

Trench felt a strange inclination to abandon himself to the enjoyment of this view. He thought he would love to sit there undisturbed and watch the view before him till it all vanished; he disliked the sound of the voices which came to him from upstairs; he did not want to hear laughter then!—when, suddenly, he remembered what Burwell said that night at the Drayton's, that there was nothing pleasenter than to sit in this little room and watch the view outside.

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It came to him like some rude intrusion, dissipating the charmed pleasure which everything held out to him but a moment before. He turned away his head from it; he felt a melancholy rapidly possessing him, and the next moment he saw Maud by his side, looking pale and disturbed. "Kiss me quick!" she said, holding her lips to his.

"You are cold and shivering; is there anything the matter?—That letter?" he began, but before he could finish they heard Miss Prescott's voice calling out, "Where are you, Mrs. John? here is Nina come to kiss you good-night!"

Trench kept watching Maud all the time. She was lively, excitable, and appeared to abandon herself to the pleasures of the evening with a strange recklessness. She drank toasts to all the people present, and made them all drink the health of that mysterious lady of Mr. Trench's. Somebody drank to absent friends, and she drank confusion to absent enemies. St. John mentioned Burwell's name, and Maud exclaimed, "Let us all drink to the unfortunate man of the season!"

Prescott stood up and proposed to drink the health of the distinguished stranger, and said that a speech from him would be very acceptable indeed; perhaps the company was not aware of the fact, but this was Mr. Trench's birthday! Upon this they all clamored reproaches for not being informed of it sooner. Trench contented himself by saying: "My birthday

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is not the most suspicious event of my life; I am sorry to remember it. Though for the thirty-two years that I have lived, I have lived not in vain; I have admired the ladies!" Maud lifted her glass to her lips and said in response, "Here is to them whom age teaches experience!"

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SCANDAL AT THE CLUB.

The party broke up early. Maud complained of a headache, and St. John, Prescott and Trench, who had accompanied the ladies home, dropped into their club for a few minutes.

The scene which presented itself to their view as they entered the smoking-room was very lively. There were almost a half a dozen men present, all smoking cigars or cigarettes, with the glasses or decanters of something near them, their faces more or less flushed,—it was difficult to determine, whether from the drinks or from the laughter in which they evidently had been indulging.

The wit of the Club was holding forth. He was sitting in a chair with his leg thrown over its arm, his hat on the back of his head, with a paper in his hand, from which he had evidently been reading aloud. Amongst them was Burwell, lolling in an arm-chair, his face red, his hair almost over his forehead, his voice sounding the loudest. He appeared to be intensely amused, and the peals of laughter which he emitted were more apparently infectious to the others than the intrinsic humor of the wit's reading.

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When the three men came in the wit cried out: "See the conquering hero come!" jumped up to shake hands with Trench, and to congratulate him. The rest laughed, and Burwell, who started to scowl at first, ended by bursting out into a scream of laughter. He nodded good-naturedly to Prescott, called out "Hello, Harry!" to St. John, and wound up by saying, "How-do, Mr. What-d'ye call-um!" to Trench. "Waiter! Waiter! Where the devil are all the waiters gone to? Here you are, my boy! Ask the gentlemen what they'll have!" he hollahed.

Trench did not take any notice of Burwell. He smiled on some whom he recognized there, and sat down between Prescott and St. John, shook his head vigorously when the waiter approached him, lit a cigarette which Prescott offered him, and remarked to the man next to him: "You all seem to be awfully jolly here."

"Continue that story!" cried Burwell to the wit; "we are all dying to hear the story. Read that article in the 'Howler' about Trench, Harry? Famous fun! Devilishly clever written!"

St. John looked grave, nodded his head, and then said to the wit: "Please finish what you are reading. Don't let us disturb you."

"Sure Mr. Trench won't mind?" asked the wit, looking over his paper. Some of the men present kept casting side glances at Trench to watch the effect.

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"I am sure, gentlemen, I shall mind very much more if you think it could in the least embarrass me," replied Trench, coolly.

"Embarrass! Fiddlesticks!" cried out Burwell. "Go on! Go on! Ho-ho-ho!" He was getting, momentarily, more excited, and St. John observed to Trench that he had seldom seen Frank in such a state before.

The wit took up the paper. "Shall I continue where I left off, or shall I begin from the beginning?"

"Go ahead where you left off—where you left off!" cried a chorus of voices, and he began to read, conscious all the time that Trench was sitting and watching him.

" . . . Coming with such recommendations, and to the house of such eminently fashionable people as the Prescotts, Mr. Trench naturally had the entee to the best families of Boston's society. He was invited everywhere—admitted to everything. The best clubs were put at his disposal. He was the guest of the Brahmin's; he was dined at the St. Botholph, wined at the Tavern, feasted at the Algonquin; and there was not a coterie or a clique exclusive enough in Boston that was not proud to receive him as one of their guests, and to include him as one of their set."

Burwell chuckled at that. Trench did not budge, though both Prescott and St. John looked at Burwell very severely.

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". . . 'Twas even whispered that a Back Bay maiden, whose looks were divinely fair and whose purse was devilishly long, was, for the sake of true love, ready to renounce her country and her kin, and to follow the example of her proud sisters across the Atlantic, had not something happened over which the whole of Boston's four hundred are excited to the highest pitch!

"The "Howler" has already referred, in brief, to a midnight squabble in which two scions of the Back Bay were implicated, who had a hairbreadth escape from figuring in the court among the rif-raff who usually come up to be fined for being drunk and disorderly. It has now transpired that one of these personages of quality was no other than our distinguished visitor, Mr. Wellesly H. Trench, while the other, if the Howler ventured to disclose his name, would reflect disgrace on one of the best-known and respected men in Boston."

The reader glanced up at Burwell with an incredulous air, but the latter cried out, "Go on, go ahead; I am the most damnably respected citizen of Boston! I am!" The wit continued:

"The 'Howler,' which published an account of the affair at the time, hinted at a reason less simple than an attempt at garoting, with which the two young men tried to hush up the truth of the matter, and, on careful inquiry and most undeniable information, we are able to state that our surmise was not a

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baseless one. . . . The whole affair, in fact, has leaked out, in spite of all efforts of the interested parties to conceal it or to explain it away. The names of the parties concerned are whispered and talked about by all the men at the Brahmin's and other fashionable resorts, and everybody is well aware that there is a lady implicated in the matter, whose standing and connections alone are the only consideration why the 'Howler' withholds her name from the general public. . . .

"The lady in question is one of the leaders of Boston's four hundred, and claims the descent from one of the proudest lineages of our Back Bay aristocracy. Her blood is of the bluest, her looks the fairest; she lives and dwells in one of the palatial residences that adorn our Back Bay, and her husband is one of the best known, wealthiest and most respected men in the city. In accordance with the tastes of the Back Bay ladies, she dotes on foreign lions."

"Ho-ho-ho!" came from Burwell.

"And when Mr. Trench appeared on the scene she undertook to tame him.

"The spirit of the nation which has manifested itself in the protective tariff showed itself in a more emphatic degree in our domestic men who resented any favor bestowed on the stranger, especially as that lady's actions were enough to excite more than mere aspertions. There were particular reasons why

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a certain young man should have esteemed her conduct as a particular grievance, and the matter which drifted from bad to worse was brought to a disastrous climax under the strangest possible combination of circumstances.

"It appears the smart set of the four-hundred contrived an 'Outing.' It consisted in driving to a country hotel, where they all remained till the small hours of the morning. The party included some of the best names of Boston's society and Mr. Trench, of course, was one of the indispensable guests. How the belles of the Back Bay and our aristocratic young men acted there; how they were entertained by a ballet-dancer, the skill of whose high kicks has thrilled less fashionable audiences in other places; all this is a tale yet to be unfolded in the pleasant future. Suffice it to say that more wine was drunk by the men than was good for their wits, and Mr. Trench, particularly, availed himself of the opportunity to display those characteristics for which his nation is so famous.

"There is verity in wine is the old saying, and the two rivals who had floated most of their feelings to the surface gave expression to them in a very heated altercation. The lady's name was bandied about by them; they exchanged very warm words over the subject; the warm words led to hot blows, and the result is that Mr. Trench has a scar on his forehead, which, to say the least, is very unbecoming to his

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complexion. It is rather a pity that in this country such an affair could not be ended with more dramatic situations, where one or both men might suffer themselves to be killed, to be wounded, at least to have their coat tails perforated instead of resorting to the vulgar exercise of fisticuffs. It is true, however, some say, that Mr. Trench is going to utilize that scar to advantage, and the only regret which some of his acquaintances entertain is that they could not be present when he will relate to some susceptible transatlantic maiden, the romantic adventures which he encountered in his travels through this country."

"That's the book!" roared Burwell. But nobody seemed to take notice of it and the wit continued:

"A representative of the 'Howler' called yesterday at the Prescott's to ask Mr. Trench what he had to say on the subject. He seemed to be very much worked up over it, and at first remained reticent. His host, though, persuaded him to say something, to deny or affirm the story about his quarrel. Mr. Trench hesitated. 'It wouldn't do for me to say anything on the subject, doncher-know,' he kept repeating. To the pressing inquiry of the reporter, though, he admitted as much, that there was a great deal of truth in what had already been written. He smiled when the question of the lady's name was put to him; but then many people have smiled before. Shakespeare has already said something about smiling and smiling."

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Burwell, at this point, seemed as if he could not restrain himself any longer. He burst out and shook with laughter.

"That is not smiling, you are laughing, my dear fellow;" said the wit. "I am sorry, Mr. Trench, you saw the reporter at all;" he remarked.

"I had no intention of seeing him, till Prescott insisted;" replied Trench, crushing his cigarette.

"Oh, I thought it would be better to see him and say that we had nothing to say;" said Prescott. "All this is a damn lie about Trench saying anything at all. It's a good experience, though, and it is worth something."

"It will go well in the book about America;" interposed Burwell. "Here, waiter bring me a Martini cocktail!"

Trench did not take the least notice of him.

"It is a confounded shame!" remarked somebody in the company.

"Oh, well, it is nothing but natural to American newspapers;" said Prescott. "Let's have something. What will you have, Trench? And you, St. John?"

"I don't know what you mean by American newspapers;" Trench was saying, as he lit another cigarette. "If you mean deliberate lying and that sort of thing—journalism must be an easy profession here."

Prescott, who seemed to be very chagrined the whole evening, thought it a good opportunity to relieve himself a little of his spleen.

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"Oh, no, my dear fellow, you misunderstand it all;" he began. "Our newspapers don't intend any harm or injury to anybody, and our newspaper men are sometimes some of the best fellows in the world. They are neither cheats, thieves nor liars. A reporter is all right out of his office and he means well at all times. Inside, while he is discharging his duties, he is another being. He is a detective, a hangman, a preacher, a philanthropist, a judge, an advocate,—everything at once and all things in turn. He may be himself the greatest scoundrel in the world,—when he is pursuing a delinquent he assumes the standard of morality which would hang a saint. Most of our newspapers confound life with sensation, and in that they live, and breathe and have their being. Nothing is spared, everything is sacrificed—the holiest ties, the tenderest feelings; and the same man who would shed tears if his friend had his fingers pricked, when he writes an article is oblivious of all human sympathies. Men and women are gibbeted, crucified, torn to pieces, held up to public scorn, to vulgar derision, and the populace is constantly entertained by the exposure of some of the most sacred and most shrinking of human relations. The existing exceptions only emphasize the prevailing rule. Oh, our American newspapers are great; they glory in their country and they are the pride of our Nation. Every paper has the public will for its object and the largest circulation for its aim. It is

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called to pronounce on every topic under the sun, and to let people know of everything that is going on under the moon. Our newspaper men are the self-imposed servants of the people in general, and their particular duty is to see that they don't get left on anything or anywhere. Our newspaper men are ubiquitous. Personally, they may be the most modest of men; while serving in their function they recognize nobody higher or greater than themselves. There is nothing they cannot penetrate—there is nobody they would not approach. They swarm here, there and everywhere. They stoop to everything, stop at nothing, brave all dangers, face all trials, and if after all efforts they find nothing to tell, they are like the rat without a tail—'they do and do' and tell a tale of their own. That is our American journalism!"

The company was entertained by Prescott's description and the forcible manner in which he offered his opinion. Prescott himself, was all the time in earnest, but when he concluded, shook the ashes off his cigarette and beamed round on everybody with a smile.

Burwell, who had turned around when Prescott began to talk, and who somehow entertained a hazy consciousness that all this was meant directly against the "Howler," looked and listened with a sober, solemn face, and then remarked:

"What the devil do you know about newspapers

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and newspaper men? You make me tired, you do, when you talk so!"

"Come, liven us all up, Frank, and tell us what you know about them!" answered Prescott good-naturedly.

"Oh, I don't know much, not so much as you do, but damn it! I know the papers have more truth than poetry in them, when they talk about people;" replied Burwell with a clouded face, as if he meant to stand by what he said.

"That is a redeeming point in their favor;" remarked the wit. "Their worst truth is more bearable than their best poetry."

"That's all very fine!" Burwell continued doggedly. "You can crack as many jokes as you please; but I know enough of papers to think when I see a story in it, that it's based on something more than imagination. Where is smoke, something is sure to smolder."

"Burn, Frank, burn, that is the word!" Prescott called out.

"Never mind what the word is; I know what I am saying, and I know too, damn it, that the papers have more good in them than you imagine!"

"Tell us, Burwell, what is the whole truth of that story, then!" cried several voices. "We saw the smoke, give us the matter that is burning under it! Who is the lady?"

Burwell looked around and tried to look scornful.

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"Gentlemen tell no names;" he said lugubriously. "Ask Mr. What-d'ye — Mr. that man—Trench!" he added, looking angrily at the latter.

The company laughed, Prescott looked alarmed, and St. John exclaimed, "Burwell, are you mad?"

"Oh, don't mind him, he is drunk!" said Trench, getting somewhat pale, while Burwell looked up at St. John and said patronizingly:

"You are a damn nice fellow, Harry! You are the real old stock. But you are a fool! Ha, ha, ha! have a drink with me — no? I am drunk, am I, Mr. Trench?" Burwell was going to say something more, when the rest of the company, apprehending some trouble, began to shout, "Tell us about the newspapers! Tell us about that story!"

"The newspapers are all right, all right!" he said with a loud sigh, nodding his head to emphasize his opinion. "They aren't going to see scandal in society, and they know a damned sight more than you do, my dear boys! Mr. Trench may be sober, and I may be drunk and that sort of thing! But we aren't going to let any damned Englishman come here and break up our families, the best families we have.—"

But Burwell didn't finish; his rising temper was rapidly sobering him up, but for a moment he was more dazed than ever. Something wet splashed against his face which made him jump up. He was faced by Trench, who, unable to restrain himself

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any longer, had thrown the nearest glass of water into Burwell's face. St. John and Prescott, as well as the rest of the company, sprang to their feet and when Burwell made a dash for Trench he was held back by a pair of strong arms.

Trench was also being restrained. The two antagonists stood facing each other, white as death, glaring wildly, their nostrils dilating with a passionate rage.

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed Trench, "I did this because I could do nothing else to resent all his insults of the evening. I am perfectly convinced that the article in the newspaper was instigated by him—"

"You are a liar and only judge others by your own action!" retorted Burwell.

Trench continued: "You have all laughed at that article and that night of our fight; it is quite true that we came to blows. That man spoke insultingly of a lady whom we all esteem, and I knocked him down. Nobody knew of the affair save him and myself—and you can judge how it got into the paper with which he is connected. I have stood all I could," he said, turning to Burwell, "and I tell you, once for all, if I hear again my name coupled with that lady's in the same insulting manner, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life, by God!" thundered Trench, while Burwell was held back by friends from dashing against him.

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Trench when he finished picked up his hat, but before he could leave the room he was joined by St. John, who put his arm through his and walked out with him, leaving the rest of the company pale and amazed. Burwell also stood stupefied for a second, then dropped into a chair, burst out into a roar of laughter, crying all the time: "Ho-ho-ho! That's a good one; 'pon my word of honor—that's a good one! See them walk out together? Ho-ho-ho! Ho-ho-ho!"

St. John and Trench walked arm in arm for some time without interchanging a word. Suddenly Trench broke in:

"I'm awfully sorry, Mr. St. John, that it should have happened in your club, especially when you were kind enough to have me elected as one of its guests. But you saw yourself the provocation—"

"Don't trouble yourself about it, Mr. Trench; I am only sorry that you should be subject to such annoyance, and I think with you on the matter of the article. You can't imagine how disappointed I am in Burwell!"

"It is very kind of you—and I am very, very sorry."

"Not at all! I owe you a great debt of gratitude, Mr. Trench. Pray don't attempt to deny it—I know it is my wife who is the cause of your quarrel. It suddenly dawned upon me when they were reading it out in the club—and if I can ever be of any

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service to you, pray command me, and I will still more appreciate your friendship for both of us."

Trench did not reply. Neither said a word. St. John's voice had sounded so soft and serious, that Trench knew he must have been very much affected by what had happened. Trench also had not trusted himself to speak while they were walking, but when they stopped to part, he asked:

"Where is Prescott?" as if he had only just noticed his absence.

"He stayed in the club, evidently to take care of Burwell;" replied St. John. "Good-night, Mr. Trench! You will come to see us to-morrow, won't you? Be sure and come! I know Mrs. St. John will expect you;" he added, walking off.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

Late that night when Prescott returned home he walked straight to his sister's door; when he entered her room and lit the gas he displayed a nervous excitability which he seldom, if ever, had betrayed before. His sister was undressed and in bed; but she was wide awake when he knocked, and her features were animated with an expression of alarm, while her staring eyes exhibited traces of restlessness, if not painful thought.

"Oh, Mary;" he burst out, "we are in the greatest fix! There is the deuce of an affair going to happen."

"Why, what is the matter?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, don't ask me; I don't know anything in particular, but something dreadful is going to happen between those two men."

"What two men?"

"Trench and Burwell, of course. A plague on both of them! They nearly came to blows at the club to-night; and what between one and the other I nearly went distracted."

"Why, what do you mean? What did they do?"

"What didn't they do? I don't know; they are

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mad, or drunk, or something is the matter with both of those men. Burwell was very full to-night; I suppose he did it to show that he can get along without driving. He said he had to do something to get an excuse for living to-day. At all events, when Trench came in with us to the club, we found him there in the most hilarious spirits, while a lot of other fellows were amusing themselves over that newspaper article."

"What poor taste!"

"Yes, Mary! I knew there was going to be trouble between the two if we didn't prevent it. We tried our utmost, but we failed; and they nearly came to blows."

"Goodness! over what, Willie?"

"Oh, Burwell was very insulting to Trench all the evening; the latter bore it with as much equanimity as a hot English temper could, I must admit At last, however, they broke through all restraints and they would have probably killed each other if they hadn't been kept asunder"

"How did it happen? What did they do?"

"Burwell became unendurable at last. He had been drinking all the evening, apparently, and he was mad It appears it is all true what the paper said about them, they really had a fight that night; they came to blows and were separated by a policeman. It is confoundedly disagreeable. It all came out to-night, and Trench said he would thrash him

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again if ever he attempted to bring his name into a newspaper article. He believes that Burwell wrote that thing in the 'Howler.'"

"Burwell!" she exclaimed raising her head in astonishment.

"Yes, Mary; and the worst of it is, Mrs. St. John's name has been dragged into the affair. Oh, it is miserable, wretched thing from beginning to end, and it makes me almost wish Trench had not come to visit us!—Why, what is the matter with you, Mary? You look pale and cold!" he exclaimed, abruptly, coming nearer her bed.

His sister had suddenly fallen back on the pillow, and lay there shivering; her teeth were chattering, a pallor spread over her features, she drew the cover closer to her, half-hiding her face in it.

"I am only a little cold, Willie. Tell me all about it!" she said faintly. "I'll be all right in a second;" she added, while he tucked her in gently, and then began marching about the room.

"I don't know that I have got anything more to tell you, Mary!" he exclaimed. "I don't think Burwell acted very gentlemanly in the matter; appearances are deucedly against him! I don't know what Trench did—I hate to believe anything against either of them; but, if what Burwell says is true, Mary, we are in a terrible fix!"

"What does he say, Willie?

"Oh, he was drunk, mad—crazy with jealousy, I

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suppose. I don't believe he knew what he was talking about; he had blabbed so much at the club before us that, for fear he would say something more foolish, I stayed to take care of him. I took him to his rooms. He was raving; he wept and laughed like a mad man! It is Mrs. St. John that is at the bottom of the whole trouble He swears he adores her! He kissed a bundle of letters which lay on his desk as if one distracted; the next moment he showered imprecations on their writer! He is really out of his mind at the present, and does not know what he is doing or saying! He cried like a child when it dawned upon him that everybody was against him, and he exhibited most abject misery when it struck him that you were also ranged on the side of his enemies, as he calls us all who disapprove of his conduct. He spoke of you one moment as if he were madly in love with you, and the next second he appealed to heaven to witness that he was her abject slave, and that she was the most divine woman and the most cruel fiend in existence! Oh, it was pitiable, Mary! I am not surprised you are so touched. I was nearly torn to pieces myself, when he appealed to me to help him to prevent some catastrophe from happening to the St Johns"

"A catastrophe? What does he mean?"

"I don't know! He says Mrs. St. John jilted him for Trench, and what not. I can't tell half he raved about to-night. He says she is sure to go

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away with him, or do something dreadful to disgrace the whole family; that nobody knew her; that she was a demon, a tigress, without pity or remorse, or anything human in her!"

"I don't believe it—I don't believe it, Willie!" exclaimed his sister, defiantly raising her head and looking all flushed and angry

"I don't either, Mary, at least not all Burwell has been raving about! But we couldn't persuade him in anything *we* believe. I suppose nobody could convince him that I am most wretched over the affair and don't look upon it all as something to be amused with. He nearly fought me over it. But this isn't the trouble; the worst of it is, he has as much as said all this before the whole club to-night and, it's terrible, Mary—it's terrible!"

"Goodness! And St. John was present all the time?"

"Yes; that is the most ghastly thing of the affair. No names were mentioned, of course; but from what Trench and Burwell said it was very clear whom they all meant. Harry acted like a brick! When Burwell was blustering and kicking up that row there, and Trench had let off his fireworks, St. John stood up with that grand indifference of his, and walked out of the room, arm in arm with Trench."

"Good for St. John!" exclaimed his sister. "I knew he would act like this. He is the most per-

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fect gentleman in Boston!" she added, excitedly, her eyes glistening with buoyant delight.

"I believe you, Mary; we all think so, and it has made some of us pretty well ashamed of ourselves for acting as thoughtlessly as we did to-night, I can assure you. I don't believe anybody suspected, though, who that mysterious lady was. I don't believe St. John thought so; I didn't surmise it, I am sure; though now, for the life of me, I couldn't see how I could have helped suspecting it all along. And now, what is to be done, Mary?"

"Have you seen Mr. Trench since? Where is he?"

"I presume he is in his room now. He left with St. John, and I am certain I saw a light in his window as I came up. He was talking of going away the other day; he showed me some letters he received, that day of our outing, in which his hasty return is very strongly urged."

"Go away, Willie? Are you crazy? Why, it would be the worst thing that could happen to anybody! Can't you see that it would only excite more talk, and scandal, and everything else?"

"Oh, I suppose it would! I don't doubt that it would; it takes a woman's lightest wit to remove a mountain of solid masculine reason. Well—er—the St. Johns have been talking of going to Europe!"

"Oh, Willie! don't be an idiot and talk such nonsense."

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"I'll try not to, Mary; I'll try very hard! What would you advise me to do?"

"Go and see Mr. Trench. Tell him everything Burwell said, and urge him not to leave Boston for the world—not for the world!"

"Yes, Mary; not for the world!"

"Oh, I don't know what to do, myself!" his sister continued. "I suppose I'd better write and ask Burwell to come and see me to-morrow! Poor Mrs. St. John! And her baby so sick, too! The fool! What did he do it all for? Why did he go and create all this disturbance? Oh, I could box his ears!"

"Don't, Mary; don't do that to Burwell! The poor man is smitten enough without your blows. It's a terrible thing, Mary, to be in love and be jilted; and jealousy is worse than drinking! 'Tis blood poisoning; 'tis brain fever; 'tis a kind of double madness, for which a bullet in the brain is the only cure!"

"Love and jealousy? Nonsense, Willie! People who are in love have more consideration;" she said, decisively.

"I suppose they have, Mary. Now, I recollect, I am sure of it. I was as joyous as a fish in the waters when the girl I loved married the other fellow—you remember? It was the most signal Instance of self-effacement; wasn't it, Mary? I always do that sort of thing—never kick at the decrees of heaven!"

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"Now you are becoming your silly self again!" said his sister, smilingly.

"Oh, well, you lifted a load off my mind, Mary; I didn't know what to do before I came in to see you. I thought I'd have to do—the Lord only knows what! I wouldn't have been surprised if the considerations of honor had forced me into challenging Burwell for insulting Trench who is our guest—and, then, into killing Trench for the trouble he caused to our dear friends—the St. Johns. Tell me one thing, Mary, did you suspect anything yourself?"

"I don't know that I did, Willie!" she replied decisively. "I don't know but I might have, if I allowed my surmises to get the better of my instincts. Though I thought it very strange what Burwell said and did lately. The other day, he spread the report that Mr. Trench was writing a book on Boston in which most of the people he met were not going to figure in the pleasantest light possible; that he was going to caricature us and a lot of other stuff. Then I heard him talk, lately, very bitterly of women in general and some women in particular Burwell was certainly not himself lately, but nothing in the wide world would have made me believe him capable of being, in any ways, connected with that article. Do you really believe he had something to do with it?"

"I'm afraid, Mary, there is little doubt on the subject."

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"It is dreadful, Willie! I don't know that I want to see him any more at all! I suppose I'd better, though, for everybody's sake; but I'm sure I don't know that I can do much to help matters. Oh, why is the world so contrary—and why are men and women so stupid, Willie?"

"I suppose, Mary, because they can't all be Prescotts;" he replied, solemnly.

She only glanced at him brightly, but did not smile.

"I don't care, I think it's all unjust and wrong!" she broke out, "And men are wretchedly wicked! Why can't they let Mr. Trench alone? He'll have a grand opinion of Bostonians when he goes away."

"Do you think, Mary, he is in love with Mrs. St. John? Do you think they are both in love with each other?" asked Prescott seriously, but as abruptly, as if the thought had suddenly flashed on his mind.

His sister stopped. She looked at him strangely, quickly, and then answered quietly:

"I don't know, Willie; I suppose they are. The world is so wrong, and it is so difficult to read the human heart! I hardly thought so before this evening; but Burwell's absence, Mr. Trench's presence—and I watched them, Willie! And, oh, why should it all be so? I am sure, Mrs. St. John is very, very unhappy!"

Miss Prescott's eyes were rapidly filling with tears.

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"I suppose I'd better go and let you fall asleep, sister!" said her brother quickly, turning out the gas, "you must be tired from the drive; good-night. And, Mary?"

"Yes," she asked in a trembling tone.

"Don't let Mater know anything about it; she'll worry and get excited. We must move out to the country as quickly as possible; good-night again."

And he stole out on tiptoe, and gently closed the door behind him, and walked away with an oppressed heart when he heard his sister's sobbing.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

TALKING IT ALL OVER.

Prescott, as he walked toward Trench's room, saw a light under the door, and a minute later was admitted. Trench was half undressed; he looked quiet and composed but his features were gloomy and set. He was preparing to go to bed, a great number of things were scattered about the room; he had evidently been engaged in packing or unpacking, while the chair and the writing materials indicated that he had been busy in correspondence.

"You here?" he asked Prescott, as the latter entered the room. "I have been waiting for you."

"My dear fellow, you don't know how confoundedly sorry I am for the whole affair to-night," said Prescott, walking over and impetuously shaking his friend's hand. "I would have never believed Burwell to be capable of such action."

"Oh, he's a drunken poltroon; and the only method of argueing with such a man is to give him a sound cudgelling, and I'd have done it if it hadn't been for your and St. John's presence there."

"I can't understand it all. Burwell has been a very intimate friend of ours, and we have known each other as kids; I never saw him act anything like it. Mary can scarcely believe it all yet."

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"So you have talked it all over with your sister?" asked Trench, throwing some of his clothes from his portmanteau into his bed.

"Yes, I told her all about the row you had at the club."

"What did she say? what did she think?" interrupted Trench.

"She thought it very unfortunate; she's very, very sorry, and could not believe that Burwell had anything to do with that newspaper scandal."

"I am damn sorry myself!" said Trench, unbending. "I wouldn't have given you all this trouble for the world. I don't know what to do to repair it all; I suppose it is impossible. Is Miss Prescott very much worried? Can I see her now?"

"No, she is in bed and asleep by this time; we have talked it all over. I took Burwell home, and he gabbed as if he were out of his senses. And the only thing Mary is uneasy over, is how all this will effect Mrs. St. John."

"What does she say?"

"Nothing. Mary doesn't believe anything that might be said against her friends She blames Burwell dreadfully; I don't suppose she will ever forgive him."

"But what does she say about Mrs. St. John and myself?" asked Trench impatiently. "I suppose you told her all that Burwell said to you, didn't you?"

"Yes, almost all. But Mary has more faith in

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mankind than most of us have. She is only concerned about Mrs. St. John, and would give the world to save her from any trouble."

Trench did not reply for a second or two. He was bending over a trunk when he said quietly:

"I don't believe there will be any more trouble. I intend to return to England by the first steamer I can get after to-morrow."

"Oh, no! You mustn't do that."

"Why?"

"Mary says so; it will spoil everything. I was going to advise you to pack up and go; I was going mad myself a moment ago; but, thank goodness, I am better—very much better, thank you!" And he wiped the perspiration off his forehead as if he had undergone a terrible strain.

Trench unbent and stared at him scrutinizingly.

"You are a queer fellow, Prescott, a very queer fellow!" he remarked. "Most people would think you would just enjoy the whole thing, and take an elopement or an intrigue as the most delightful subject for your drawing-room dissertations."

"Most people might, but I wouldn't, I assure! I enjoy wicked things as long as they are purely imaginative; but when real people are mixed up in the affair, I am the most miserable of human wretches. I never believed in love anyway, and think it the source of more trouble than money, I do!"

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"Did you stay at the Club long after we left?" asked Trench abruptly, his face clouding again.

"Not very long. As soon as I could get Burwell to come, we went. The fellows there are terribly excited over the matter and are trembling in their boots lest the whole thing should get into the papers and involve the club in a scandal. They think it very reprehensible."

"They do, do they?"

"Yes; they all applaud Harry's action, though. 'Tis so easy to admire good things in other people, and so difficult to perform them ourselves, isn't it? I have always noticed that—haven't you?"

"Why my dear fellow!" exclaimed Trench, "Mr. St. John is one of the most perfect gentlemen I have come across in the course of my whole existence. The world is so queer!" he added abruptly and remained silent.

Prescott regarded him scrutinizingly.

"Yes, there are powerful chumps in the world!" said Prescott sadly, and then he added: "The human destiny is guided by cross-purposes and the logic of fate is damnably against our reasons."

Trench glanced at him and smiled.

"And the blind men see visions through a church door, and the damned fools see wise men in the mirrors, and strange things happen as long as strange people live in the world.—My dear fellow," he broke off suddenly, "it's nearly two o'clock and too late to

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amuse ourselves with platitudes! It is hard enough to live without thinking too hard, especially when hard thinking is not conducive to the best condition of the liver. Good-night! I'm completely played out!"

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

TRENCH BEFORE MISS PRESCOTT.

Miss Prescott was pale and looked as if she had but very little rest when she appeared at the breakfast table. But she was very pleasant with everybody, though the two young men could not succeed in throwing off that consciousness which made them feel ill at ease.

Miss Prescott, as Trench looked at her, appeared so sweetly tender; her eyes were so liquid and large, and reflected such a fond sympathy; her voice was so soft and so delicately tempered with a melancholy, that he felt his whole soul go out to her in contrition of the pain he must have caused her and in anxiety to make amends for it in every way he possibly could. He was afraid to look too long at her; he was even afraid to engage in conversation with her; so he talked more to Mrs. Prescott, while Prescott endeavored to dispel his gloom by thinking, "What the devil is all this about?" and acting as if he were seriously occupied in analyzing his wits.

The young men had not exchanged a word on the subject of last night's affair. Prescott glanced over the paper, and said there was nothing in it worth reading—there was nothing about Trench there! But this only brought a faint smile on his sister's

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face, a doubtful look on his mother's, while Trench asked, in a loud voice, what the predictions of the weather were. At last, breakfast was over. It was late in the morning, and Prescott said he ought to hurry down to the office, as he expected a man from Chicago, who had "an idea" of building a Pantheon. Trench was not going with him. The latter pleaded the excuse of letter-writing, which he said he had shamefully neglected for the last couple of weeks, and as soon as Prescott left, excused himself to the ladies and went upstairs to his room.

He had been busily writing for an hour or so, listening all the time to every ring of the bell, in expectation of a message from Maud, when there was a knock at his door, and Miss Prescott's maid came in and asked whether he was at liberty to come down and see Miss Prescott, who was waiting him in the library.

"Tell her I'll come down directly;" he said, and jumped up immediately to arrange his correspondence and prepare himself to go down.

It was not without a presentiment of uneasiness that, in reply to a feeble "Come in!" he entered the library. He felt almost unnerved, while he kept saying to himself, "Pooh! what the deuce!" He glanced at Miss Prescott. She looked strikingly pretty, the pallor enhancing the placidity of her features with a charming *reflete* of feminine purity. She seemed calm; her expression was restful,

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though her eyes looked solemn with thought, and from her manner it was evident that she was at a loss how to begin what she was going to say.

"Won't you sit down?" she said, with a faint smile, motioning him to a chair near her. She was holding a book, and in glancing at it, he said:

"I see you are reading the 'Ring and the Rook;' I always thought it a most marvelous production."

"Yes; you are sure I didn't interrupt you?" she asked, a smile appearing and vanishing on her features. "I wanted to talk to you, Mr. Trench, though I don't know that I should."

"Why you should talk to me, Miss Prescott?"

"No, no; what I meant was, I didn't know what right I had to talk to you. You will forgive me, Mr. Trench, if you find it impertinent, and will excuse it on the ground of my motives—of the motives of a friend; won't you?"

"You may be sure I won't need to excuse you for anything! You have a right to talk to me on any subject you please, Miss Prescott, to say to me anything you choose. There is certainly no one here I would more gladly listen to."

"Thank you;" she said, blushing slightly. "Won't you help me then to tell you what I wanted to say?" she said suddenly, with an appealingly frank look into his eyes. "You are so kind, that it has taken away all my courage;" and she smiled nervously,

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while she brushed the hair from her forehead. "You know what I was going to talk to you about?"

"About that affair of last night? About Mr. Burwell? And the whole miserable story; isn't that so? You can't imagine, Miss Prescott, how sorry I am for everything, and more than everything for your sake. Willie has told you all about it, hasn't he?"

"Yes, he has. But it isn't that! You are sure Mr. Trench, Burwell had anything to do with that newspaper article? You know, it seems so difficult to believe it."

"I am very, very sorry! I don't know, of course, but that I might be mistaken. Unfortunately, all evidence points to him as the instigator of it. Judge yourself! There was nobody present when we had our squabble that night; nobody had even seen us, but that policeman; and *he* did not know our names either."

"But the other men at the club might have spread it as a joke, mightn't they?"

"Yes, they might have; it's true! Boston men are more diligent gossips than the most rattle-brained of village women; they might have gossiped. But they did not know anything, and certainly could not have had any motive."

"But does gossip ever depend on motive, Mr. Trench?"

"Very seldom, Miss Prescott. There is a natural tendency in the composition of the gossip to talk

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away the reputation of his dearest friends in easy thoughtlessness. But I have a feeling, an instinctive conviction within me that he did it; and besides, with the exception of calling me a liar, he did not deny when I charged him with it before the whole club. I am not alone in this opinion, Mr. St. John fully concurs with me."

"Oh, I suppose you are right in thinking so;" said Miss Prescott, plaintively; "but I hate to believe anything against anybody; and I suppose it's only womanlike not to accept the inevitable and not to bend to facts. You see I am not one of those who make friends very easily, and it pains me terribly to believe mean things against them."

"I am sure your friends ought to abstain from being mean, if they have your friendship as a reward for it." Trench said this in obedience to an impulse; he was serious, and was not looking at her at the time. She glanced up at him, but as soon as she felt his eyes turning toward her she drooped her head. His compliment had interrupted the train of her thoughts for a second.

"Thank you, Mr. Trench;" she said gently. "You are so generous with me that I can hardly believe you would be unjust to others. May I ask you,—pray don't tell me if you can't, and don't consider me indelicate, please; but can you tell me what made you act as you did the other night? You know, the night of that dreadful row?"

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"I wish I could, Miss Prescott. I don't know myself, beyond the fact that he was aggravatingly insulting in his references to Mrs. St. John. I did, I suppose, what I shouldn't have done. If I had stopped to think, the fear of exciting all this scandal would have had a greater restraint on my resentment. That is all I know; that is all I can tell you about it, at least, for the present."

Miss Prescott sat silent for a minute or two. She seemed absorbed in some thought; she appeared to have some difficulty in giving it expression. At last, however, she said softly, looking up at him bashfully and struggling to conjure up a smile.

"I am going to be more inquisitive, you see. You don't know what it is to begin to be considerate with an American. They say about the Englishwoman—if you give her inch she takes an ell; an American, if you give her a grain she wants the earth. But I assure you I would not ask to place any confidence in me, if I were not conscious that I could try and make myself worthy of it."

"I am sure you are worthy of it, Miss Prescott."

"Will you tell me, then, what you propose doing now? Please, please don't think yourself obliged to say a word to me on the subject, if you don't think you ought to. Only Willie said last night you were preparing to go away."

"Yes; I thought it would be the best way out of the whole thing for everybody."

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"Did you consult with anybody on the subject?" she asked and blushed violently. Trench also felt his face flush for a second, and his thoughts scatter in confusion. But he regained his composure and replied with emphasis:

"No, Miss Prescott, I did not."

"Then, Mr. Trench, you must stay here until everything subsides You must do it for the sake of all of us. Forgive me for speaking to you like this, but I know the nature of Bostonians too well, when I speak so. You will promise me you won't go away for some time to come, will you not? You know how glad we are to have you here; and don't you see that your sudden departure for Europe will lend color to everything that has been written? I know you would not like to cause more pain to anyone of us, and I know you are anxious to spare Mrs. St. John's feelings, are you not?"

"I will do everything you tell me, Miss Prescott. You have a right to command me; the least that I can do for all the trouble I have caused you is to put myself at your disposal. I am your guest, Miss Prescott, and you are my best friend."

"Oh, well, be very careful, Mr. Trench, what you do;" she said standing up, smiling, but avoiding to look him straight in the face. "You know little what you are saying; and you'll see how quickly I am going to avail myself of my command. I have written to Mr. Burwell asking him to come up here about half

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past eight to-night; I know it will be embarrassing for both of you to meet."—

"You want me to be away to-night?"—he interrupted, rising, too, and taking hold of her hand and feeling strangely uncomfortable.

"Very well, then, I shall do as you say."

"And take Willie with you, won't you? I want to talk to Mr. Burwell all alone."

"I'll spirit him away somewhere, Miss Prescott, good-bye! I haven't called at the St. Johns yet, and I think I ought to. One thing, Miss Prescott,—I wish I hadn't told you that I wasn't going to write a book about Boston."

"Why?"

"Because I'll miss the opportunity of writing my thorough appreciation of the goodness of its women."

"There, Mr. Trench, you are again dropping into your old vice of generalities!"

"I don't mind, as long as the particulars understand whom I mean by them. Good-bye—"

"Oh, wait a moment, please!" she said as he turned to go. "Will you be kind enough and get a special delivery stamp and mail this note for me to Mr. Burwell?" Trench felt the recurrence of the same unpleasant feeling. "Thank you, very much; and don't forget to inquire after the baby for me. Good-bye."

And Trench left.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BURWELL'S LETTER.

The day was dull, gray and lifeless; the atmosphere was heavy and damp, and a mist rested on everything, wrapping the trees of the Common and enveloping the sloping perspective of Beacon street in a dull, blue haze in which the distance appeared as a shifting cloud. Trench, as he walked out, felt the influence of the weather permeating all his being.

Strange how, all the while, he had been with Miss Prescott, he thought little or nothing of Maud; and how, in spite of his assurances to himself that he ought to feel very sad—at least very apprehensive—he had felt bright, pleasant, almost happy while he stayed with her. Trench recognized all this as an anomaly, but he did not try to explain to himself all that had taken place within his own nature. He walked along with a buoyant resolution in his mind that, happen what may, he must not do anything which would cause the smallest pain to Miss Prescott; that he must do nothing which would show him the least wanting in sincere appreciations of her friendship. She was trusting, so simply frank, so sincerely simple and so straightforward in her

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feelings, that to slight such a friendship would be evident of a beggarly ingratitude!

A man that cannot value a woman's friendship is a friendless being, thought Trench to himself as he sauntered along, and though, as he was approaching the St. John's residence he tried hard to conjure up Maud's image to himself—she only lent herself as a pale, attenuated, slender figure who no sooner appeared than she disappeared in his imagination.

When he entered the house and was shown up to the boudoir he found Maud, who greeted him with a quick, impetuous kiss.

"I have just sent over the man with a note to you;" she said, drawing a chair nearer the fire and holding her hands before the flame. "I would have sent over sooner, only I just came down. I spent another miserable night. I didn't fall asleep until ever such hours, and I slept till half past nine."

"Poor you! you look pale, though very, very pretty," he said, examining her face. It seemed pinched, her eyes looked smaller, there was a general contracted expression about her features which gave her a peculiarly attractive appearance. It looked as if her prettiness was sedately conscious of an inward trouble that was distasteful to it. She felt cold and tried to get warmer by being closer and closer to the fire.

"Don't I look very well?" she asked, apparently innocent of the possibility of such a thing. "It's a

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wretched day, and I spent a more wretched night! Did you miss me, darling? Did you think of me all the time?" she asked suddenly, turning around and looking affectionately at him. "You know, there was hardly a moment that I left you out of my thoughts! When Harry came home and told me what had happened at the club, I thought I would go frantic, I wanted so much to see you!" And she put out her hand to take hold of his, and then bent over and kissed him again.

"You didn't worry, did you, darling?" he asked. "I was so sorry for what had happened. It was impossible to avoid it."

"Yes, Willie told me all about it. Wasn't it wild? You nearly came to blows and called each other all sorts of names before all those men—wasn't it dreadful? I was scared blue when he first began to tell me of it; I knew that man was capable of everything, if he were driven to desperation. Oh, my love!" she exclaimed suddenly. "You don't know how terribly I suffered to think that I could ever have loved that man. Will you ever, ever be able to forgive me, dearest? Really and truly forgive me for it?" she asked, kneeling before him and looking him into the face. He took her head into his hands and said softly, kissing her:

"You must not feel like that, darling! How is the baby? Miss Prescott gave me strict instruction to find out for her how your son and heir was?"

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"Oh, I don't know whether he is better or worse, and I don't care!"

"Hush, Maud! You must never talk like that; it is not true to your nature, and to do a violence to one's natural feelings is the greatest outrage one could commit!"

"Do the Prescotts know about the whole affair?" she interrupted.

"I don't know how much they do know and how much they don't! I had quite a long talk with them about it, and I think, they suspect everything, but believe comparatively little."

"What did they say?"

"They are very kind; particularly Miss Prescott is very considerate, but most of her talk was concerning Burwell."

'What did she say about him? Do they believe that he had that article published?" she asked eagerly.

"Prescott himself has no more doubt of it than I have, but Miss Prescott finds it very difficult to recognize the real facts of the case."

"I am not surprised at that; Mary is secretly in love with Burwell."

Trench felt a queer sensation flit over him. He did not reply for a second; he seemed absorbed in looking closely at Maud who was still kneeling near him.

"You know, the hardest thing that happened to

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me last night," he said, in a serious voice, "was when Harry wrenched my hand in gratitude for what I had done for you. I felt ashamed to death for it; I hardly knew what to say or do; and yet I secretly resented it. You smile? It was no easy matter for me to enact, I assure you!"

"Yes, darling; I know it must be terrible to you. I do wish that things were different. I'll go distracted if something does not happen to relieve me from all this terrible strain. I thought I was crazy last night. I got quite frightened. I lay in my bed and kept listening and listening; and, you know, something kept sounding terribly loud, and the darkness appeared such a weird lightness to me; and something kept singing in my head. It was really terrible!"

"Poor you!" he said, gently smoothing down her hair. "What did you worry about?"

"Oh, nothing in particular; only I loved you so! And I thought how happy we could be if something happened to let us be all and all to each other. Wouldn't that be lovely, darling? Oh, by the way!" she said, suddenly jumping up from her kneeling posture; "I want to show you a letter I got last night when we returned; it's quite wild;" And she ran across the room and fetched from her escritoire a note which she handed to Trench, smiling and blushing all the while, and kneeling near him; she held her head close to his and watched him read it.

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"Dear Maud," the note ran, "I have been reading over your letters, our letters, which stirred up a host of memories of our past....One thing I am convinced of, as long as I hold these letters before me, that our past cannot be so easily effaced from our lives, as a momentary caprice or a passionate infatuation might make you think they could. I have tried to forget. I have endeavored to persuade myself that all our past was a dream and that the present was the reality; that you never loved me and that I never believed in you, but it is no use. The written records of our past imprinted themselves so burningly into my nature that a mere wish could erase them, and that our past gives me a right over your future which I do not intend to relinquish. I have certainly nothing to fear since, if you do not change in your present conduct, I have nothing to expect from my future. I have begged of you, I have prayed you to have more consideration for everything that is human and womanly, and you have turned a deaf ear and a callous heart to all my entreaties! I can only tell you now that I cannot stand it any longer, and that if I am to suffer, others shall have to suffer with me."

Trench, when he read it through, folded it carefully and handed it back to her without saying a word. His face was clouded, his eyebrows were knit, his lips pursed up; bitter reflections were agitating his mind.

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"Isn't it weird?" she asked, smiling uneasily.

"Very; what do you intend doing?"

"Nothing; Burn it in the fire—here it goes!" And she threw it into the flame which instantly shriveled it up and consumed it. "I wish everything could be done away with like this! Pity our pasts aren't made of paper. What are you thinking of, darling?" she asked suddenly, turning away from watching the flickering flames and looking into his face.

"Nothing," he answered rather moodily.

"Oh, yes; it was something, and something about me, too. Confess, wasn't it?"

"I don't remember if it was. Thoughts are so insubstantial, that unless you consciously arrest them, they are apt to vanish without leaving any impression on the memory. I think I was watching the flames and reflecting on what you said."

"Really and truly?" she asked, putting her arms around his neck and holding her eyes close to his.

She was irresistibly fascinating that moment. There was almost the charm of a child about her manner—and he kissed her fervently.

"Tell me, will you love me forever and ever, and ever like this?" she asked in dreamy happiness. "It's wonderful how a moment's happiness makes one forget a whole age of misery, isn't it?" she asked, conscious of a sudden pleasurable feeling with which her whole being was animated.

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"'Tis! Oh, I will love you for a very, very long time—as long as you love me!" And he smiled into her eyes when he said it, holding her chin up and kissing her lips.

She laughed back and pouted.

"I am going to send you away soon, darling," she said, rising, "unless you like to stay here to lunch and meet Clara St. John, an old cat who is a dreadful bore. And I've got to go shopping with her and take Nina with us for a drive. But you must come in to-night; I want to see you, I want to speak to you. Harry is talking about our summer change, and I want you to help me decide whether to go to Europe or stay here. You can't come in to-night? Why, where are you going? How queer! You'll come to-morrow. Come early, dearest, and stay to lunch, and we'll go out driving afterward. How I hate to have you go!"

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

A NIGHT OF DESPERATE REFLECTIONS.

As soon as Trench left, Maud ran upstairs to see how baby was. She expected the Doctor in a few minutes and she was painfully impatient for him to come. She looked over the crib; the child lay there with his eyes closed, his cheeks red, wasted, almost emaciated from sleeplessness and pain, while his breathing came heavy, and thick, and fitful. The pity which the child excited in her was not unmingled with a certain irritation when she realized that everything seemed to go against her. "I suppose the Doctor will tell me that he is going to die, and *he* will think I have killed him!" she thought despondently. "I don't care!" she added, snapping her fingers in expression of a reckless, bitter resolution that suddenly swept over her.

Poor Maud! She had spent such a painful night; she had talked so much to herself, upbraided herself, and so piteously sought for some outlet by which she could rid herself from all those irritating and oppressive surroundings, that no wonder she told Trench she thought she had gone crazy. The wonder was that she could be up and be so actively energetic that morning, after such a night of tossing between desperate and conflicting resolutions.

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When she first received Burwell's note, her only impulse was to hand it to Trench and ask him to take her away with him at once. She was terribly possessed by a vague fear of consequences; his words, his actions and the situation in which Burwell was placed might drive him to anything. The next moment she paused and began to think whether it was not possible to escape from either alternatives. What could she do? What did he intend doing with her letters? What a fool she had been to have written letters to that man! She thought she ought to make it a fast rule of her life, never to pen a compromising note to any man, woman or child. She had been uneasy whenever she thought of those letters; time and again, she felt strongly that they ought not to be in his possession. She had burned his; and once, when she was at his rooms, taking tea there with Harry and Mrs. Drayton, and Burwell had shown her surreptitiously where he kept her letters, she begged him afterward to destroy them, and he had absolutely promised to do so, and now he had them still. Perhaps it was an empty threat? No; she wished to heavens it were! But she knew Burwell too well to delude herself with any such empty hopes, and she was distracted with impatience to discover some scheme by which to recover them, destroy them, or make him do something with them.

Good God! what will happen if she does not succeed in obtaining them? She supposed they will

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be published in the newspapers, or he will hand them to Harry; he is sure to do something dreadful with them. She might as well go away with Trench now. She could easily regain in England what she would lose here, and then,—and then? Why, she could be so happy, and so free from all deceit, and all harassing to which she had been so mercilessly subjected for the last couple of weeks.....

But the tempting future, these alluring possibilities were quickly put in the background by the pressing, urgent necessities of the present. She thought,—she remembered so much; how much she has risked and suffered and endured for him. Tears welled up in her eyes when these memories came thronging to her mind. Goodness, how cruel he was to her! Was there anything she had ever refused him? Was there anything she would not have done if he had asked her, when she loved him? How could she help loving Trench? It wasn't her voluntary action, she could not resist it. It was her fate; and he had been so good to her, he had been so faithful, so generous and manly all this time.

Maud was convulsed with sobs now. She was lying in bed, in the dark, and she turned and hid her face in the pillow, trying to smother her sobs; and her husband, who was sleeping in the adjoining room, came in and, bending over her, asked tenderly:

"Maud, Maud! what are you crying for? What makes you so miserable? Don't make yourself sick

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over the baby, and don't let anything else worry you, please, Maud! You don't know how strange I felt when I heard you crying. I grew cold and creepy, and it seemed as if a terrible darkness was oppressing my mind. Please don't worry; I won't go back until you promise me you won't annoy yourself and cry any more. Suppose, even, our boy dies, we have Nina left; but if you get sick, and something happens to you, what would we all do? There now, that's good of you, Maud. Good-night, and fall asleep, won't you? Good-night;" and he kissed her tenderly and walked back to his room.

Maud lay still for a moment or two. All the storm of her emotions and thoughts had suddenly subsided. A dull calm succeeded the tempest of her heart and head.

No! she thought again. She couldn't go away with Trench, at least not yet! She couldn't leave Harry so abruptly and let him suffer so much; she couldn't leave them all. She knew what she would do. She would write to Burwell and ask him to come and see her, and tell him everything, and throw herself on his mercy. It couldn't be that he had no pity for her at all; he must soften toward her if he had that love for her.

No! on second thought she would not write to him. She did not know how to begin or how to end such a note. There would have to be a change in it, and he might resent it and not come at all!

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She must go and call on him to-morrow evening at his own rooms and plead with him. She should tell him, if he persisted in acting like this, that she would have to go away with Trench, that she couldn't stand it! She would have so much to appeal to him by, that he could not help but relent, she thought, a buoyant hope dancing in her heart. She was sure he could give up those letters, and that she could make him understand that everything was inevitable, and that she was straining the utmost of her power to save everybody from as much trouble as possible.

This plan, the more she thought of it, the more feasible it appeared to her. In fact, 'twas the only plan at her disposal; and she felt anxious to realize it as quickly as possible. She fell asleep, restlessly expecting the morning to arrive; and when she awoke and got up, she was equally impatient for the evening to come. She was nervous, irritable and discontented with everything that was happening around her. Trench's short visit had calmed her nerves a little, but now the reaction was setting in, and it was becoming a positive torment to her to discover so much cause for complaint. Why was not the day brighter? It was so dull and disagreeable outside! And there was that cat coming to lunch, and she had to go out driving with her, too! Harry was so stupid to have such a sister, and to invite her to lunch, on such a day of all the days in

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the world! And here was Nina crying! Gracious! 'twas enough to drive one frantic! "Why does not the doctor come?" He said he would be there by half past twelve, and now it was nearly one and he had not come yet

At last, the bel. rang and when the doctor came and examined the child he looked very glum. He turned to her, saying that it was very extraordinary, very extraordinary.

"How is he, Doctor, do you think?"

"It is difficult to tell yet, Mrs. St. John. The fact is, I expected his fever to have gone completely by this time, and instead of decreasing, it has positively increased to-day! A most extraordinary case, Mrs. St. John. However, we'll see what can be done for him."

Maud, who thought more of her Doctor than of any other gentleman of the learned profession—in her present frame of mind, in which every one suffered who did not act as she wanted them to act—considered the Doctor very much of a humbug.

But she did not let herself be troubled very much, one way or the other, with what the medical man had said. When he left, she went about seeing to the lunch and, ordering to have Nina dressed, she said she might be brought down to the table. This was a great privilege for the "little one," as her father called her, and she crowed with delight.

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The scene helped to dissipate some of the clouds hovering over Maud's features, who went about, thinking all the time she wished the evening would come, and that the thing were accomplished!

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CHAPTER XL.

MAUD IN THE DARK STREETS.

About half past eight in the evening, St. John was surprised to see his wife dressed and ready to go out. She had a heavy jacket on, was thickly veiled, and the plain dress which she wore helped only to accentuate the superb shapeliness of her form.

"Why, are you going out, Maud?" he asked, looking up from the paper he was reading.

"Yes, I'll be back very soon;" she said, unconcernedly, standing tiptoe before the mirror and trying to fasten her veil.

"You are not going alone? Can't I accompany you?"

"No, thank you. I'm only going to see Mrs. Drayton for a few minutes; I'll be back very soon. Come over, please, and tie my veil for me."

Harry had performed that office so often for her that he quite prided himself on being an expert at it. "Too tight?" he asked, looking over her shoulders.

"Just a little, er—that will do, that's just right, thanks! I'll be home in a few minutes, in an hour at the latest; she added, walking out into the dark street.

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Maud did not allow herself a moment's pause to think; for she knew, if she hesitated, she would falter, and then her courage might fail her altogether. As soon as she found herself in the street, she walked on, trying consciously to rivet her thoughts on nothing else but that she ought to try to reach Burwell's rooms as soon as possible. Everything else she shut out from her imagination.

It was dark; the heavens were starless and, though the atmosphere was somewhat clearer than it had been all day, there was a chilliness in it which penetrated her at first. It was such a long time since she had walked alone in the street at night that she felt conscious, as if she were doing something out of the usual in her life, and she to look on it almost as a novel experience. What would people think if they met her and recognized her? Oh, she could turn it so easily into a joke and have them all think that it was quite a wild thing to do. She was slightly uneasy though, and quickened her pace, when on passing Charles street she met a man, who glanced at her, turned around to stare, and then stopped to look. She wondered who it was? He certainly must have known her. She felt slightly disturbed, and thought it best to walk on the side of the Common, where it was darker.

She had not very far to walk. Burwell's rooms were on Joy street, and within a few minutes she was putting her hand on the knob of the door-bell.

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What if he were not in? she thought. Well, she'd wait; she must wait and see him to-night, for she'd never summon up courage enough to venture on a similar expedition again. She knew his habits; she knew that he invariably came home after dinner for a few minutes, even if he was not going to stay in the rest of the evening. But here the door was being opened, and Burwell's man was standing ready to admit her.

"Is Mr. Burwell at home?" she asked, stepping inside. She wondered whether the man recognized her.

"I don't think so, ma'am; I thought I heard him going out only a few minutes ago."

"Won't you go up and see, please?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am." She was sure he recognized her, she thought to herself, while standing in the hall. She wondered whether anybody else would come in while she was waiting for the man to return.

"He is not in, ma'am;" the servant said, coming down the stairs. "But he can't be very far gone, and he must have intended to return at once, for his desk is open and the light is burning. Will you step in and wait a minute?"

"Yes, thank you, I think I will. Are you sure he will return very soon?"

"I expect so. He never leaves his desk open, ma'am, unless he is going to return quickly;" said the man, turning up the gas brighter, and shutting the door that opened into the bedroom. Then he left.

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CHAPTER XLI.

THE BUNDLE OF LETTERS.

When the door was closed and Maud was left alone, she was possessed by a strange sensation. It was a mingling of alarm and expectancy of something vague that was threatening her, and something definite that was happening to her, both of which, somehow, she felt, were getting the better of her conscious volitions. What had she done? She felt so strange, sitting alone in the room of the man who had been so much to her in her past, and in whose letter she read such a portent to her future! She had come to say so much, to plead so much, to get so much, and she felt that her tongue would refuse her to say anything, save some stammering utterances, if she were suddenly confronted by him! She felt disappointed at finding him out; it would have been so much easier to begin everything if he were in. She felt, an introduction would be necessary before she could tell him what she had in her mind and heart when she started out for his rooms.

What if he did not return and she had to go home with the suspense of another night and another day over her head? 'Twas unendurable! She wondered, suddenly, where he kept those letters,

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and how long she would have to wait? She would not stay there very much after nine—and she wondered what time it was now? She looked around. She knew the room well and all its appointments. There were some things on the mantel-piece which she had given him, there were things on the desk which she had presented him with on different occasions, and here was the last Christmas remembrance she gave him.

Maud was becoming restless and fidgetty. She guessed she would not wait very much longer. She kept looking around. She wondered where those letters were, where he kept them now? She remembered them being locked up in a curious little box which he kept in one of the drawers of the desk. She remembered even in which drawer they were.

Maud became very restless; she threw glances at the door, she listened and kept looking at the desk. It was an old-fashioned desk, and she could see a lot of papers and things scattered all over it—Burwell was always in the habit of keeping his desk in disorder—"artistic disarrangement," he called it.

She kept looking steadily at those papers folded in the corner of the desk. She could see several letters carefully piled up and tied around with ribbon. Her heart sank within her—what if these were her letters? She felt herself getting pale. She was almost trembling from nervous excitability. God! What she wouldn't give to be able to jump

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up and run over there and look, and rumage! She could get the box, she could take the whole little box and carry it off—and burn it all!

But suppose the door opened suddenly and he came in? All would be lost. The last thought relaxed the nervous strain to which she had worked herself up, and she leaned back in her chair.

Still nobody was coming, nobody was stirring. It was silent, motionlessly silent around her. There were footsteps ascending the stairs all of a sudden, and she felt her breath stop. Suppose this were he? But the footsteps passed the door, and she heard them go up the stairs.

She breathed freer, and jumped up from her seat. She craned her neck, she stood riveted to the place, looking, listening; she saw nothing but the reflection of her own blanched image in the mirror across the room. She felt almost choking with suspense. She hardly knew how she made the first step, but the next moment she was at the desk, had almost plunged toward it and stood there.

Somehow she felt easier. The first object that threw itself in view was a revolver which lay near her picture. A wild thought came into her mind, a wild feeling coursed over her whole being; she clutched the weapon, and then drew back.

She looked around again; nothing disturbed the silence. She glanced at the door, and thought, if he should come in now, if he attempted to disturb her—

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by heavens, she would fire at him! Then she bent over and began to search for her letters.

What was this lying before her—a note? "My dear Mr. Burwell," she read. "If at all convenient, and if you are at leisure to-night at about 8:30, please call and see me. Nobody will be at home except mamma, and I want ever so much to talk to you. Very sincerely yours, Mary Prescott."

"It's there where he is gone?" she thought to herself, while she was pushing papers about, until she picked up a note which she recognized in her own handwriting. "*I wish, darling,*"—she glanced at and crumpled it in one of her hands, and then she reached for that bundle of tied-up letters.

Nervously, twitchingly nervously, she tore off the cord, unfolded the paper which wrapt them around, and she could hardly suppress an exclamation of fear and delight when she recognized them to be her own letters. With trembling hands and quivering nerves she began to look them all over; they were all hers, all hers! Then she thought she must look for more, she must get them all.

She jumped up, glanced at the door for a second; still nobody was coming. She picked up the revolver which she had placed on the desk while she was looking for her letters; she thought she heard somebody appoaching. She stood expectant, defiant and resolute. She had nothing to lose, if she did not recover everything.

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"SHE REACHED FOR THAT BUNDLE OF TIED UP LETTERS."

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somebody was ascending the stairs. Her heart beat fast; she held the bundle of letters in one hand and in the other the revolver. All her nervousness had disappeared of a sudden. All her fear and trepidation seemed to have turned into a desperate resolution. She waited, she listened. The steps came near her. Should she fire as soon as he entered? What if she missed? She could shoot herself then, at least.

But the steps passed by the door and, with a loud sigh of relief she knelt down and began to pull out the drawers. One after another she kept opening and diving her hands into their deeps; still there was no box there, the box she was looking for. At last, however, she found it. She opened it quickly, looked into it—'twas empty!

So she had them all with her? A wild sensation of joy swept over her. She hastened to push back the drawer, to replace the revolver, and started for the door.

She thought she should never get down fast enough. She met the servant in the hallway and hardly stopped to tell him that she couldn't wait. "It doesn't matter!" she said when he asked her for a message that she might wish to leave. She ran down the steps and thought she could never get out on Beacon street; and when she did strike out on Beacon street, she felt that it was such a terribly long distance to reach home! She wished she could

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get a carriage, or wings, or something to quicken her pace with.

She walked along, at an amazing rapidity for her, a tumultuous joy convulsing her whole being. She felt so happy; tears started to her eyes. She felt as if she had suddenly escaped from bondage, as if she had regained liberty and light and pleasure, and the whole of God's world from which she had been so mercilessly shut out for such a time! How she wished she had Trench by her side now, and how she longed to be able to share with him all her feelings! It would be such happiness! Why should she not call at the Prescott's? It would be such great fun to ask him to accompany her home. They would all be so surprised. She really would do it—especially as she was so close to them.

Maud, in the excitement of the moment, had quite forgotten the fact that Burwell was there. It only flashed across her mind when the servant opened the door, and then she simply sent up a message to say that she wouldn't come up, but that she wanted Miss Prescott to call on her to-morrow afternoon. "Could you get me a carriage?" she asked the servant, and a few minutes later Maud returned home, transformed into a different being from the consciousness that she was holding in her hands something which she would not have bartered for the whole world of treasures!

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CHAPTER XLII.

BURWELL'S DISCOVERY.

Burwell, when the servant delivered the message which Mrs. St. John left for Miss Prescott, rose to go. He really felt he ought to go and Miss Prescott thought she should not detain him. It was half past nine, and though she did not expect the young men before very much later, his restlessness had communicated a want of ease to herself and, as their conversation was at an end, she let him go.

Burwell left the house and walked toward his rooms in a less hurried manner than he came; the eagerness with which he walked toward the Prescott's was substituted by a more satisfactory feeling—the feeling that he had done a great wrong and that he was arrested, just in time, from committing a greater evil.

He was stirred by a plaintive sensation; he was agitated by the realization that he had been foolish, vicious, and the tenderness of Miss Prescott's pleading and the clearness of her vision had wakened in him his better feelings, his calmer judgment and his more lucid introspection.

So he had been foolish? He thought to himself, shamefully foolish. Heavens, what an influence a

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pure woman could have over him! Why had he not come and told Miss Prescott everything about it? Mary would have been so considerately good to him. 'Twas not in vain that he held her opinion in such high estimation; it was not in vain that he felt eddies of grateful emotion, when, on receiving her note, he discovered that she at least was still his friend, and that she would judge him aright.

Well, she was right! He had acted badly, very badly—he had acted like a brute! he said to himself. What was the use of all his threats and coercions? he asked himself. Oh, he had been mad! As if anything he might say or do would deter Maud from pursuing the course of action she had resolved upon.

And he had been wrong, grievously wrong, to let that article be published in his paper! He meant well, though; he thought one and the other would combine to frighten that man away from Boston, and, once out of his sight, he thought Maud could yet be saved. Well, 'twas terrible! 'Twas all done now, and he supposed it couldn't be undone—and Harry, and nobody, would ever forgive him. He'd better go and tell him that it was at his instigation the thing had been published—he had better make a clean breast of it to him, and tell him that he was drunk, or mad, or bewitched!—Oh, damn! there's no explanation that could in the least excuse his action to anybody!

He owed an apology to Trench, too, he thought;

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but, for the life of him, he couldn't see how he could bring himself to come near him in any other spirit than that of a detested enemy. Well, well! one thing he could and must do this very evening, that is to write to Maud and tell her that the last note he sent her was written in a crazy fit; that she was at liberty to do anything she pleased; that he would never trouble her any more, either with his presence or his epistles—in fact, that he was going away, and was returning to her all her letters.

Yes, he really must go away—to Europe, to Egypt—somewhere out of all this turmoil! He could not endure it any longer. He felt very sad when the last thought came across his mind. He was opening the hall-door then, and he walked upstairs into his room, surprised, at first, to find the gas lighted and his desk open.

"Well, well!" he said to himself, with a queer smile. "What a chump I am, to have forgotten to lock my desk! I must have been in the very devil of a hurry."

He walked over and picked up Miss Prescott's note, pressed it to his lips, threw his hat off, and sat down to write that note to Maud.

"Now, here goes for clear composition!" he said to himself, dipping the pen into his inkstand, and beginning to write:

"DEAR MAUD:

"I shall probably leave Boston in a few days,

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never to return, at least not until the time when I've learned to be able to live here without seeing you. I know it is presumption for me to say so, but it is only to contradict another impertinence of mine that I am writing to tell you: that henceforth I will never venture to interpose in anything you may do with regard to yourself or others. If, in some remote future, you will let me see, occasionally, the baby, I will esteem it the greatest favor; but I will never trouble you with anything concerning myself. I will not dilate on the subject of my feelings toward you, you know what they have been; they have not changed and they never shall. But if your generosity can accept the explanation of madness, the rage of despair, as the reason for all that I have done and said to you for the last few weeks, I will esteem myself the happiest man in the world without ceasing ever to feel the keenest remorse for having done what I have. I am leaving with this the package of all your letters, of which, I devoutly trust, you never believed me capable of making any other use. "F. B."

Burwell was not satisfied with the diction of his letter, but he felt he could not attempt to write another. His mind was so confused, and he had such a host of tempestuous feelings storming within him at that moment. It seemed to him when he concluded writing it that he had signed away his last hope, his last right to her love.

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Well, it must be done, he said to himself, with a set resolution on his face. "Where is that letter I had in my pocket? Ah, here it is! God, what a letter! It seemed as if every word came from her soul. How she loved me. Tut-tut, tears to my eyes, what next? Humph! I suppose when she receives all these, she'll cease even to think of me. Well, so be it, here it goes. Where are the others? Where, in thunder, have they gone to?" he asked himself, looking about the desk. "Why, bless my soul, I thought I had them right here; I thought I was reading them over again last night. I suppose I put them back into the box. How I have lost my head completely! Here I leave my desk open, and then I don't know where those letters are gone to. Where's the key to that box?"

And Burwell began to look for the key. It was not in the place where he usually kept it when he had it detached from his key ring, so he concluded he must have left it in the box. He bent down to open the drawer, he took out the box, opened it—empty!

An alternate sensation of heat and cold ran over his body; he put back the box and began to search amongst his papers. They weren't there. He pulled out all his letters from the pigeon-holes, he opened all the drawers, dived his hands into everything, tossed things here and there, banged back the drawers; the letters weren't there!

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Burwell commenced to search all over again. This time it was with feverish quickness, with a nervous anxiety, while waves of darkness swept over his vision, and, when stooping, he felt dizzy for a moment.

He sat down by his desk again, rubbed his hand over his forehead, as if he were trying to press back his memory, glanced at his desk again, stared vacantly, and when the truth begun to steal on his mind he exclaimed in a whisper, "Good God! can it be possible that the letters have gone?'

He jumped up again, this time as if he were inspired by a terrible energy, and threw himself at the desk once more in search of them. He picked up every paper, separated it from the others, threw it on the floor; pulled out all the drawers, turned them upside down and, not finding them there, he kicked them across the room. The letters were not there! The letters were not there!

"The villains! The thieves! The miscreants!" he kept repeating hoarsely, tearing and tossing letters across the room. "Who stole my letters? And now we are all ruined, all, all of us! Oh, God! if I could only catch the man who did it and put a bullet through his brains before I put an end to myself, if I could only do that!" And as if possessed by a frenzied inspiration he ran over and pulled violently the bell, while he still kept tossing his letters and crumpling his papers, and turning everything upside down.

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"Here you are!" he exclaimed, as soon as his servant opened the door, running toward him, pistol in hand and shaking it into his face. "Here you are, you thief! you scoundrel! you liar! you miserable sneak thief, you! Where are those letters? Return at once those letters! or, so help me God, I'll put a bullet through your brain right on the spot! Those letters?"

The man stood as if petrified before his raging master. His eyes were bulging out with consternation; he held his hands, as if warding off the impending fatal blow, and the only thing he could scream out was, "What letters? For God's sake, what do you mean?"

"Those letters, you damned fool! Those letters I left on the desk here, you skulking hypocrite, you! A package of important letters, tied up with a black ribbon, you dolt, you! you idiot, you! pretending to be innocent! You know very well what letters you took from this desk, you thief! Hand them right back, or by——" and he aimed the revolver at his head.

"For God's sake, sir!" cried the man in terror, "for God's sake, don't do that! So help me heaven I haven't seen your letters, I haven't been near your desk!"

"You haven't been near my desk? You haven't taken the letters? Then who the devil did take them?" thundered Burwell, still pointing the revolver at the man.

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"I don't know sir; nobody was here, sir, except Mrs. St. John! So help me heaven, if I ever hope to be saved."—

But Burwell was not listening to him. He stood as if riveted to the ground for a second; his hand drooped, a wave of darkness swept over him, and he would have staggered, had not the servant assisted him.

"I am sorry, Peter, I am very sorry for what I said," Burwell said, huskily. "I am all right now, thanks! Pick up those letters and lock up the desk, I'll see you later." And picking up Maud's letter from the desk he rushed out of the room.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

BURWELL ACCUSES MISS PRESCOTT.

Miss Prescott remained sitting in the room after Burwell left, sitting alone and thinking. She was more than satisfied with the result of their interview; she had found him very much more tractable than she had expected, and she had no difficulty in making him see the wrong course of his actions. 'Twas almost pathetic to her to see Burwell's concentrated face and the serious determination depicted on it, suddenly reflecting painful contrition. 'Twas very affecting to her to notice the doubtful appeal with which he turned to her and asked: "Do you really think me a brute, Miss Prescott?" She really felt sorry for him. Poor fellow, he must have suffered so much; there must have been so many things that goaded him on to such desperate action! . . .

After all, 'twas rather queer for her to do what she was doing, she thought to herself. She was in reality facilitating matters by leaving them a free course of action. What will Maud do? How will it all end?

Miss Prescott, who had a book before her, while those thoughts kept revolving in her mind, endeavored once or twice to give her attention to its pages, but she gleaned slender intelligence from what she

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was reading. In fact, she was only conscious of her eyes wandering over a medley of images and incidents, and people and ideas, and what not! . . . She was unaware how long she had been sitting this way, when suddenly she heard somebody run up the stairs and, when she turned around and looked up, she saw Burwell right in front of her.

"Miss Prescott!" he said abruptly, standing before her, his hat in his hand, his eyes roaming wildly about the room; "Miss Prescott, I have come to demand an explanation. What is it that I have done to you?"

Miss Prescott stared at him. His face was pale as death; there was a ghastly glitter in his eyes, while his tossed hair helped to emphasize the strangeness of his appearance.

"Done to me, Mr. Burwell?" she asked in astonishment.

"Yes, to you, Miss Prescott; I must have injured you in some way, I suppose, to make you act like that toward me. What is it that I have done, for you to conspire against me?"

"Conspire against you!" she exclaimed, almost startled out of her chair. "The man is out of his senses," she thought to herself.

"Yes, against me, Miss Prescott!—in order to get my letters—you know what I mean. Oh, I wouldn't have believed it against you if my most devoted friend had come and told me about it."

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"Will you tell me, please, what you are talking about, and what is it now that is troubling your mind?" she interrupted, perplexed at his attitude, manner and words.

"My letters—her letters! Why, you know, her letters—they are all gone! She has stolen them. It was a very neat job, no doubt. But, by Jove!"—and he restrained himself from uttering a threat that was uppermost in his mind. "But what had you to do with it?" he continued; "I believed in you so sincerely and devotedly.—Oh, my God, my God!"

"What had I to do with it? I wish you would tell me!"

"Oh, nonsense! Miss Prescott. You invite me to come and see you at a certain hour, keep me here, talk to me as if you were my best friend in the world, while you know that she is over at my room, all this time, getting out those letters; and when she has got them and comes to tell of it, you let me go —you are glad to get rid of me! 'Twas very nicely planned—there is no mistake about it—"

"I hope there isn't!" she said bitterly, half indignantly. Burwell glanced at her inquisitively, dubiously, and then went on:

"Why, I believed so much in you and in your judgment and that sort of thing, that I was truly sorry for having caused anyone the least trouble. I was actually going to send her back those letters; but you have all been a little too smart with me

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that's all I can tell you! I don't care now what happens, who suffers, what becomes of all of them! You've all plotted against me, and I'll show them that I'm not so easily outwitted."

Miss Prescott grew pale in watching the rage that was rapidly being depicted on his face. She jumped up and half appealing, half pityingly laying her hand on his arm, said:

"Mr. Burwell, will you tell me, please, what has happened to you? I understand very little of what you are saying to me, unless you explain."

Burwell stared at her. Her calm face, her frank manner, the tone of her voice, the expression of her eyes—all communicated to him the fact that she was telling him the truth, and all this helped rapidly to allay his bitter suspicions.

"Oh, I don't know what I'm doing, Miss Prescott —only I'm distracted with doubts and fears and what not! I suppose I have been a brute to you, too, I suppose I have! only I don't know! I came home and found her letters missing from my desk, a bundle of her letters—and my man tells me that she has been there. I intended to send them back to her this very evening, upon my word, I did. Look, here is the note I was writing to her; but she didn't trust me, and I suppose everything is over now. God!"—

Burwell looked terribly distressed.

"I am very, very sorry, Mr. Burwell!" she said,

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He stood there silent for a second, as if he were seeing something.

"No, confound it!" he suddenly exclaimed. "I won't be sorry for anybody or anything. She has declared war; then let her bear the consequences of it! Do you think I can stand to have all my feelings outraged? Do you think I'll let them torment me, torture me, spurn me, laugh at me and make me their plaything?" he exclaimed, getting almost purple in the face. "That flirt! that jilt! The heartless, selfish woman that she is, trampling upon me like this—I! who would have cut off my right arm to save her from the least trouble? And all for that man, that adventurer, that English cut-throat! Good God, Miss Prescott! I can't stand it; I can't stand it!" And he broke down and burst out sobbing.

Miss Prescott stood there, terror-stricken. It seemed so strange to her, all this; his words sounded so harsh, so hard, so wild to her ears. It seemed as if every reproach he hurled at Maud fell on herself like a blow, and when he burst out sobbing she was almost stunned. She had never seen a man cry before, and Burwell's bowed head and convulsed frame appeared to her like a vision from another world in which sorrow reigned over life.

What was she to do? she thought, when the spell of the first effect began to wane. The next moment she approached him, put her hand gently

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on his shoulder and said in a soft, tremulous voice:

"Mr. Burwell, Mr. Burwell!" he shivered under her touch.

"Yes, Miss Prescott?" he asked in a firm voice, with an effort to control his emotio

"I am so sorry for you, believe me I'm so sorry!" she kept repeating in a voice of most touching accents.

"What is the use?" he begun sorrowfully, still with averted head, but turning around suddenly he broke out sharply. "There is no use, Miss Prescott. It's no use; good-night, good-bye!" and rushed out from the room.

Miss Prescott remained standing where she was, hardly realizing all that had happened to her. She heard the door slam after him, she heard his quick footsteps in the street; 'twas silent everywhere, and she imagined the echoes of his sobbing were still lingering in the room. Her whole soul yearned with pity for everybody, and, as she stood there, she suddenly thought, "If love is fraught with such sorrow, its joy is not worth the loving. Is it worth it?" she asked herself the next moment, a faint smile flitting over her face chased by a cloud of sadness, when, suddenly, her thoughts were interrupted by the voices of her brother and Trench who were coming into the house.

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CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BURNING OF THE LETTERS.

Maud was up early the next morning. She had not slept very much that night, but the few hours she did sleep were so full of repose, and her wakening was so full of buoyancy and life and energy, and so entirely free from that heavy feeling of despair and fearful presentiment, that she felt as if she had recovered the old charm of her life. She was playfully lively and brilliantly vivacious, and laughed so good-humoredly at the breakfast table that St. John, whose moods almost reflected her sensations, felt also intensely relieved and delighted to see her, her old self again. Baby was better, too, at least, nurse said so; he had spent a comparatively quiet night, and, though her fears had apparently not abated, the tending symptoms augured an approaching change for the better. St. John thought he had not seen his wife's face so full of happiness for an age, and he could not help watching her all the time.

"What is the matter, Harry?" she asked him when she caught him staring at her. "You look like in those old times when you were first in love with me."

"I am doing it over again, Maud."

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"Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't! I married you once to save myself from it, and don't do it again. You know women only marry when they get tired of the man's being in love with them."

"I always did think, if women wanted to keep the men in love with them, they should never marry;" he replied smilingly.

"But they have got a greater inducement, Harry. They can begin to fall in love themselves after they get married, don't you see?" And so the conversation drifted on, till St. John rose from the table and said it was time for him to go to the office. "Oh, Maud," he added. "I nearly forgot to tell you. I'll probably have to run over to New York to-morrow, it will only be for a few hours, it's our directors' banquet. Here you are, my little one!" he exclaimed, turning around when he heard Nina's entrance into the room.

"Come to kiss me good-bye, eh? Did you see baby, this morning? No? What! Nurse wouldn't let you in there? What a naughty nurse! Well, my dear one, good-bye!" And he kissed her and went out.

Maud really did not know what made her feel so happy. When she stopped to think of it, she really had been apprehending Burwell's momentary arrival there, and his "tearing and storming like mad." She was sure to hear something of him or from him and, in her heart of hearts she was a little uneasy at his

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silence. Perhaps he hadn't discovered yet that they were gone? She felt a sensation of joy bound up within her, which was not unmixed with a sense of the ludicrous when she thought of his feelings when he first found out that he had been deprived of that very thing which had made him so conscious of his power over her. She looked at it now in the light of a joke, but she could not help regarding her exploit with a sense of incredulous wonder—a wonder bordering almost on astonishment when she recollected what she had done and what she had ventured on!

Well, she thought, now that she had got them she did not care what else happened. They were all her letters—the only palpable evidence he had, if he attempted to prove anything against her, and if it only resolved itself to a statement, Harry and Trench and a great number of other people would rather believe in what she said than credit what he insinuated.

She thought she'd better burn them up at once. She felt inclined to throw them into the fire as soon as she reached home last night, but Harry was sitting in the library then, where the fire was flickering high! And then, she suddenly thought she'd better keep them until to-morrow and throw them into the flame when Trench was present. It would be quite fascinating!

When the morning came, though, she thought she would not wait for Trench, and that it would be

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better not to tell him anything about it. She felt so good-natured, so good-humored toward the whole world, she felt such a peace of mind, that soon after breakfast she took Nina with her to the boudoir, where she had ordered a fire to be kindled, in spite of the day being bright and sunny.

She walked in, first to the ante-room, glanced to the window and saw the river all glistening with liquid gold, took out the package of letters from a little escritoire, and patting Nina on her head, chatting with her affectionately, she kissed her fervently and told her to go upstairs and tell governess to take her out for a walk—it was such a lovely morning.

"And can I call on Cousin Fwank, mamma?" asked Nina before going.

"No, dear, not to-day." And she kissed her again.

"I wish, mamma, you'd come, too;" said Nina, plaintively.

"Mamma has got to stay at home, Nina."

"Are you going to wite letters?"

Maud looked at her pretty daughter; her little face was upturned, her large eyes looked so lovely and so liquid, and her expression was so replete with innocence and that charm which only lurks in the deleicate petals of beautiful flowers that, instead of reprimanding her for her inquisitiveness, she answered with a delighted smile:

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"No, Nina, I'm going to burn letters; and I tell tell you what," she said, as if struck by a new thought, "I'll let you throw the first letter into the fire."

The child was delighted, and her face shone with pleasurable excitement. She felt unconsciously as if her mother were taking her into her confidence, with which she was immensely pleased. She took the letter which her mother handed her, ran over to the fireplace and threw it into the flames with a crow of delight.

Then she knelt down by her mother, and watched with a serious little face the sudden flickering up of the flame and its rapid subsiding as soon as the paper was consumed.

"Now, dear, run upstairs to get dressed to go out; don't stay out longer than an hour."

When Nina ran out of the room, Maud ramained sitting in a rocker before the fire. She thought it was quite a charming idea to have let her child burn that letter; she felt the influence of something poetic in the act, and with that sensation she sat there, prepared to look them all over, one by one, before she threw them into the fire.

With what a mingling host of sensations she kept reading over those letters! She rarely finished any one of them; she was more amused and a little ashamed at most of them; her face was rippled with smiles, and she was blushing all the time, while the sentiments and expressions—the most ardent of

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them—sounded flat, starved and inflated to her now! At times, though, when she came across a letter in which she was contritious, in which she was expressing discontent with her life and her actions, she got absorbed in it, perused it carefully, and was truly and touchingly affected by its tone, as if the memory of the time when she wrote it had suddenly conjured back all the emotions which she tried to express there.

One letter, particularly, had engrossed her attention. She was bending over, reading intently the broken, fragmentary accents and phrases revealing to her the passionate doubt, the violent discontent, with which she was then agitated; and the memory of it had brought tears to her eyes She pitied herself so sincerely; there was such a tender, delicate compassion within her soul for herself, as if she had been detached from the being who had written it, and who had suffered that way. "God knows," she said to herself, "how I have tried all my lifetime to act differently and live differently!"

Suddenly she was startled by the sound of the hall-bell.

"That's Trench!" she thought to herself, with an elated feeling.

She jumped up, hastily threw the rest of the letters into the fire and turned away from it, feeling her cheeks red from the heat before which she had been sitting.

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She heard rapid steps ascend the stairs; a presentiment flashed across her that it might not be Trench after all; and the next moment, without being announced, Burwell had entered the room and was standing before her.

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CHAPTER XLV.

BURWELL'S THREATS.

Maud was disconcerted, for a moment, at Burwell's sudden appearance; she felt herself getting pale, she drew back a little, the next minute she tried to compose herself. Burwell threw down his hat on the nearest chair and sat down near the fire-place. He looked emaciated, his eyes were sunken, dull, and they glittered, as if they were mirroring some violent passions which kept sweeping over him.

"Where are my letters, Maud?" he demanded in a stern, quick utterance. She winced, but soon felt a strong determination animating her.

"Your letters?" she asked quietly, "There they are;" and she pointed her finger to the fire, with superb hauteur.

Burwell glanced over quickly in that direction; he saw the charred paper and he looked as if he were restraining himself from dashing into the flames and snatching the very ashes.

"You stole them from me, Maud!" he said huskily. "They were my letters."

"I had come to ask them of you, but I took them myself when I found them lying on your desk. They were mine, and I had a right to take them from the

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man who was mean enough to use them against me as a threat." She felt her temper rising within her.

"You knew it was only a threat, Maud. You knew I would sooner have cut off my head than let one of those letters be seen by anyone, you knew that;" he urged.

"I would have believed so, when I thought you were a different man. But the man who stoops to things to which you have done is unworthy of any trust."

"Don't you know that what I did was out of my desperate love for you? Don't you know that the wretched newspaper scandal was only done, because I thought it would drive that man away from here; that then, that then—Oh, Maud!" he exclaimed, "you do not know how passionately I love you. I did not know it myself till you became indifferent to me. You do not know what it is to love with all your heart and soul, with that kind of love which knows no change and knows only of passionate devotion. I had not flirted with you, Maud. I had taken you and given myself, body and soul!"—

"Enough, enough of that!" she interrupted with a wave of her hand. "A man who can drag a woman's name into the newspapers and expose her shame before the public, must be very manly indeed. A woman should be proud of such a man's devotion and love."

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"Maud!" he interjected, "don't you believe me, that I was mad, that I was only anxious to avenge myself on the man who had taken you away from me? You know that I would have done anything, everything to save you from the smallest pain, the least trouble. You know, you wrong me. You know you could have trusted me. Oh, Maud!"

"Trusted you?" she exclaimed, "You who could stand up before a crowd of drunken men and proclaim my name before them; who could make me talked about in public places, scorned at in the public print. You, who could run about raving to everybody that I was your mistress, and, then, threaten to produce my letters, to expose them before the world? You, you! and you come here and speak of your love for me, and your devotion to me, and tell me that I should have trusted you?"

"Still, you loved me once, Maud;" he said, overcome suddenly with a painful feeling which her words had excited in him. Maud had grown suddenly into a different being. She seemed to rise in stature, her attitude was commanding, her whole frame was quivering with excitement to which she tried to give utterance in vehement accents; while her eyes, her face, her gestures were animated with an energy, as if it had been kindled by an irresistible frenzy. She glanced at him scornfully when he said that, and answered bitterly:

"Yes, and you have made me repent enough for

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it, God knows. You need not taunt me with it now. I have others to answer to for it."

Burwell winced inwardly, but tried to control himself. He sat there, his eyes staring at her, as if he were trying hard to swallow something. When he could trust himself, he said in a calm voice:

"Maud, do you know that there are moments I could kill you?"

She glanced at him sharply. She was in doubt of what he meant; and as she looked at his set mouth, his haggard face, and the solemn expression of his eyes, a thought flashed across her mind.

"What if he has come to kill me;" but she did not evince the least symptom of fear as she said quietly:

"I don't doubt, but when you are mad you could do a great number of things which repentance cannot undo."

"When I am mad, Maud?" he asked. "You know, I have not slept a wink all night. I could not stay in the house, I would have gone crazy, so I walked the streets. All night, Maud. Thinking it all over, from the very beginning. Great heavens how I loved you! I would have knelt down in the street and cried to the heavens, only I looked up and they were gray, and they were cold and deaf to everything. You know, everything looks dull and cold to me now that you don't care, Maud. But I kept thinking it all over; I could not drive your

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image, or my thoughts of you from my mind. They kept coming and forcing themselves on me, and I remembered everything; our whole love, Maud! Have you forgotten it?—All those happy, happy times we had; how you loved me, how you gave yourself to me, all your tears, and goodness, and everything? Then I thought of when the baby was born, and I wept, Maud. I sat in the middle of the Common, on the same bench on which I sat through that night baby was born, and I wept bitterly. I couldn't believe it all. Have you a heart of stone, Maud? Are you human, are you a woman at all? I recollected how tenderly you could love. Can you tear all feelings, all ties into shreds, and throw everything to the winds; forget our past and become oblivious of God and man, as soon as your fancy is hungering for a novel passion? Are words, vows, promises all nothing, all smoke that could be drifted about by the first breath of your desires, Maud? Well, I thought it all over, and I concluded best to kill you."

Maud glanced at him furtively. But she stood near the mantel-piece, looking pale, calm and resolute.

"Well?" she said, in a metallic voice.

"Yes, I thought it best to kill you! I even went home and took my revolver and loaded it, and put in two bullets for you and two for me. I wanted to put a bullet through that very heart I have kissed

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often, and to silence my brain from thinking about it. I was not mad then; I was more calm than I am now, in telling you of it. But when I sat in my room and the sun's rays penetrated through the shades, and I thought suddenly of all your life, and how happy you could yet be, and the baby came into my memory, and I resolved to spare you. Then I was going to blow my own brains out, when I paused and reflected. I knew it would give you satisfaction; I could even hear you exclaim, 'Thank God, that's done, anyway!' And, you know, Maud; you may think it queer, but I thought I shouldn't give you that satisfaction. No, I have got to live; I have got to watch over you and save you from yourself! I know your nature pretty thoroughly by this time; I know how easily you adapt yourself to necessities, and I thought, after all, that your action of last night, your taking of those letters, was for the good of everybody."

"Have you finished?" asked Maud, standing in the same defiant attitude, her face suddenly suffused with a flush, her voice sounding stern. "Have you finished?" she repeated, her anger and indignation rising to a tempest within her. "Because, if you have, I want to tell you once, and for all, that I have no masters over me; that I will not allow you to interfere with me in the least of my doings, and that the past with which you taunt me shall not be warrant to you to meddle with my future, over which

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you have no right, absolutely no right! do you hear? I have borne from you enough, and I intend to stand it no longer. You may do just as you please; but, understand me, once and for all, that you must never cross the threshold of my house again, until you learn to appreciate the fact that I am not your mistress, or anybody your threats can frighten in the least—not in the least! Understand that!"

"Take care; take care, Maud!" he exclaimed, getting deathly pale.

"Keep your threats for those whom you are accustomed to bully, and not for me!" she retorted. "You can go and publish what you please, say what you like, and your actions will fall on your own head. I know you are coward enough to do the meanest thing you possibly can, and I certainly shall not be under the least obligations to you. I tell you I will stand no annoyance from you, of any kind. Go!"

Burwell jumped up from his seat as if he had been stunned by something. Maud's words fell on him like blows, and her reproaches lashed him into fury. He felt dizzy, and he could scarcely restrain himself from dashing against her and killing her, choking her, there and then.

"So!" he cried. "You think you can do as you please, now that you have stolen those letters, and I have no evidence of your guilt with me! You think you can spurn me, and insult me, and go off with other lovers, now that I have got nothing to frighten

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you with, eh? See here!" And he thrust out a letter before her. "Here's a letter I wrote you last night, before I discovered that you had taken my letters from me. It was Miss Prescott who got me to do it. I was going to return them all to you, if you had not taken them yourself. I was ready to do everything for your sake; to go away and never to see you, and let you even go away with that man if you wanted to, or keep him as a lover here if you preferred! I intended to efface myself from your existence, if you had had more trust in me, and you know I have never broken my promises yet! I intended to do all this; I would have done anything you wanted me to do. But now you think you have been clever enough to get the best of me, and that, with the burning of those letters, you can heap insults on my head and I will stand it, and bear it, and not say a word, eh? You can jilt one man when you prefer another, and deceive your husband when you like a lover, and, I suppose you think you can poison or kill that baby, too, if you want to; and you think you can do all this with impunity, eh?" he cried. "Now, so help me heaven, Maud! If you attempt to receive that man again in your house, if you ever receive him alone—and I will know of all your movements and doings—I will take this letter and give it to Harry, publish it to the whole world, and do worse things, if necessary;" and saying this, he thrust his hand feverishly into his pocket,

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snatched out his letter, and held it up close to her face.

Maud glanced at it and recognized it as her own. She felt her limbs tremble under her; a wave of darkness rolled over her eyes, everything around her moved fantastically, the floor swam beneath her feet, her voice refused to utter anything, she thrust out her arms, reeled forward, and would have fallen to the ground, if Burwell, in affright, had not jumped toward her and led her toward the couch on which she sank down.

"I am better now, go!" she said feebly, a minute later, coming to herself again. She shuddered under his touch, her teeth chattered, her eyes were full of despair and hate.

"Forgive me, Maud," he began contritiously, but she raised herself a little on the couch and, pointing imperiously toward the door, repeated only:

"Go, go!"

Burwell caught his hat and without turning round ran down stairs. In the hallway he met nurse and Nina, the latter and cried out to him:

"Cousin Fwank! Cousin Fwank, mamma told me not to come and see you any more."

But he did not stop. He could scarcely have the door opened fast enough for him, and he ran down the steps as if he were pursued by death.

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CHAPTER XLVI.

THE REACTION.

Maud soon recovered. She sat there at first feeling forlorn and befogged, but she experienced no poignancy of feeling, no turbulence of emotion of any kind. She felt apathetic; there was nothing clear before her, and the only question that kept agitating her with a strange pertinacity, was: "How to get out of all this?" She thought Burwell really meant what he said, and she wondered, now that things had come to the worst part, whether it was not best to go away after all. A scandal was sure to break out somewhere soon, and Harry was sure to know something of the whole matter. Why not take time in her own hands and anticipate everything? But she shrank at the thought what all this would entail. "Then why not tell Trench everything and let him decide?" she asked herself the next moment.

But, somehow, she was very reluctant to tell him anything about herself, and particularly about her relations to Burwell. He was apt to take things so dreadfully, aux serieux, and that sort of thing. She did not think, somehow, it increased,—no, not that; it did not enhance his love for her. He thought too much about matters she told him, and, though he

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pretended to be gentle and unconcerned, she knew from his serious manner and that contracted countenence of his, that he was inwardly cogitating them; that they disturbed him, annoyed him; and that he was painfully dissatisfied when he heard them. No, she could not tell him. Burwell was mad, of course; he won't really go and show that letter to Harry; she was sure he wouldn't. But she was terribly perplexed how she had managed to leave that letter behind her. He must have kept it somewhere secreted from the others, for it certainly was not in the desk or anywhere she had looked for things belonging to her. Suppose Harry knew everything? Suppose Burwell should go and tell him everything he knew and showed him all he had, what then? She thought with a strange feeling of curiosity.

But Maud did not permit herself to dwell too long on the darkest contingencies which threatened her as probabilities without invoking, at the same time, expedients which were possibilities. The pulse of life beat too fast in her to allow misery a long dominance over the rest of her feelings. The desire of pleasure, the keen appreciation of the present were too buoyant elements in the composition of her nature to permit her to resign herself to the shadows of the future, while the light of the present shone warmly around her. She detested morbidness in others, she always said, and she frequently confounded the most vulnerable sorrow with sentimental

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moroseness which she invariably tried to dispel in others, and which she always endeavored to dissipate in herself.

So she soon got up and looked out of the window, sighed aloud, picked up the note Burwell had written to her and which he had let fall, and, which after reading over, she tore up with a contemptious sniff. She was beginning to feel better. She expected Trench to call soon; the morning was so lovely outside, she thought she'd go out driving with him. She did not mind Burwell's threat and stipulation. She was indignant when she thought of his even daring to say such a thing to her. In fact, the reaction which had quickly set in had rapidly obliterated the effect of the whole scene on her. She was fast shutting it all out from her memory, and, when Trench called, she was already regarding it as a horrible nightmare outside, altogether, of actual life and the reality of existence. She was very nervous though, with Trench, while he was in the room. In spite of the fact that she laughed, and chatted, and talked vivaciously, as if she were a spoiled, petted child, she felt ill at ease all the time, he kept being so very gentle and so very serious!"

"Oh, she couldn't be deceived so easily!" she said to him. Her instincts were molded of too sensitive a fiber not to detect the most delicate of changes in anyone whose feelings were of such interest to her. She told him once or twice he was not loving her

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to-day; she said it poutingly, complainingly, her eyes looking reproachingly at him; and though he kissed the pouting off her lips, and laughed at her, and chided her for judging him by her own state of feelings, she felt inexpressibly discontented all the time. It seemed as if there were some void which she had expected to be repleted by his presence, but which remained hollow. She felt herself so much nearer him, after what had happened; she wanted to tell him so, to let him feel so, and, somehow, she could not discover the opportunity; he did not invite it, and she felt a little hurt.

Well, she had got to bear it, she thought, with a consciousness of pride in her breast. She could be cool, too, if conditions demanded it. She rose from her seat near him, and said the carriage would be at the door in a few moments; would he like to accompany her shopping a little? They wouldn't have lunch till two, and she guessed she could accomplish all she wanted before then. Trench was delighted at the prospect, so she ran upstairs to get ready. She reflected that he had not detained her to kiss her; but she said to herself she did not mind! It only took her a very few minutes, with Amy's assistance, to get dressed; so, very soon afterward, she was seated in her carriage, with Trench by her side, driving toward her husband's office.

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CHAPTER XLVII.

A PLEASANT MORNING WITH A SAD EVENING.

'Twas a beautiful May morning. The air was mild, and pregnant with a delicious freshness. The sun was shedding a lovely lustre over everything, and all objects stood out clear and finely outlined in the soft light of the spring day. The grass and the trees of the Public Gardens and the Common were already green, and, as they drove by spiritedly the breeze wafted on them the caressing scent of the flowers, which made Maud cry out with pleasurable delight, in which Trench cordially participated.

"Such a kind of a day," she said, "makes me long to be away from all the world."

"The desire of solitude is a sign of selfishness;" remarked Trench.

"You are stupid;" she replied, pleasantly. "When I speak of myself, I always include you. Such a day makes me long to be happy."

"Aren't you so, now?"

"Oh, yes; but who knows what by-and-by will bring?"

"You will never be happy, if you always apprehend the future."

"That is the reason why I long to be rid of my

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present. I think, if I could be suddenly transplanted somewhere, very far away, the influences of such a day as this would communicate to me courage to forsake my past."

"To forsake one's past is not enough to allay the fears of one's future;" observed Treneh. "It is necessary to renounce it, and to be certain not to have it repeated again."

Maud glanced at him searchingly. Trench was evidently speaking with a purpose, and she tried to divine it.

"But there are certain consequences which you cannot renounce. What then?" she asked.

"It is a wise thing to abide by the inevitable!" he replied, oracularly. "To stave off consequences does not mean to divert the course of the future; it is only a miserable procrastination of results which mock one's cowardice. The inevitable has all time to support its patience."

"Does spring weather make philosophers of Englishmen?" she asked. Trench, who had been talking seriously, turned his face toward her, and asked in the same tone, "What makes you ask that question?"

Maud felt annoyed, almost irritated, at his manner.

"Oh, nothing;" she replied, sharply; "the spring usually has a curious effect on me. Just to change the conversation, that's all; here we are."

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The next moment the carriage was drawing up before the large building where St. John's offices were. Trench and Maud got out and went inside; St. John was delighted to see and receive them. She had come to ask him for some money; she had forgotten all about it before he left, and she wanted lots of money—a thousand dollars at least, she had had got to pay out so much for so many things.

"Goodness, Maud!" St. John affected to exclaim. "Are you going to buy yourself a new hat? Here's a check for six thousand two hundred and forty-two dollars—your last annual dividend, which just came this morning, and you can do with it what you please. Don't you think I'm very kind, Mr. Trench, to give her carte-blanche over her own money?" he asked, turning to Trench.

"Husbands seldom do;" replied Trench.

"So much money, Harry?" she asked, taking the check, her eyes glistening brightly. "I think I'll hire a steamer all to myself, and go across to Europe. Will they cash it for me at the bank?"

"Let me send over for it;" St. John said.

"Oh, not at all!" she exclaimed. "I want to go and have it cashed myself. I want to get a lot of money all at once. I'd like to see what it would make me wish; it will be great fun, don't you think so? Good-bye, Harry; you'll be home to lunch?" she asked, as she was turning to go.

"I intended to, Maud; but now you are here, I'd

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better say that I won't come. You see, I've got to go to New York by the three o'clock train, so it will give me more time to prepare things if I stay here."

"Oh, you are going to-day? I quite forgot;" she said in the most nonchalant manner possible.

"Yes, this is the banquet night. And I wish you would be kind enough to send up Patrick with my portmanteau to the depot. I'll be back some time to-morrow afternoon, though I won't be home before dinner-time. How did you leave baby?"

"Very much better."

"Good-bye, Maud; good-bye, Mr. Trench; you'll take care of my family while I'm away, won't you? Good-bye;" and St. John bowed as he showed, them into the carriage and saw them drive away.

Soon after lunch Maud proposed that they should go out driving again. She had just a craze for driving to-day, she said. Trench said he did not know there was anything he could prefer, and Maud looked and laughed at him. She appeared so provokingly handsome, there was something so bewitchingly fascinating in her manner; her archness, the light which irradiated her whole face, and the expression dancing on her features which seemed to convey that she was not revealing half of her contained loveliness; that Trench, for a moment, felt carried away by the wave of fascination. As she was standing before the mirror putting her veil on, he came

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up to her, put his arms around her, and looking into her eyes said:

"Yes, there is one thing I would prefer to driving, and that is to stay here and do this!" and he kissed her ardently, while she turned round and clung to him in a passionate embrace.

"You are so cold to me to-day!" she said plaintively. "And I love you so much to-day, so much!" and they joined again in a long and passionate kiss.

"Tell me," she said when she could speak; "do you love me as much to-day as you loved me, as you loved me,"—she said, as if trying hard to record a comparison and, as if suddenly finding one, she exclaimed, "as you loved me that night when you asked me to go away with you?"

"What a funny question to ask!" he replied equivocally; "why, especially that night? I have loved you very much more since then."

"Oh, no, I know! That night? Wasn't it a dreadful night?"

"You were very brave to tell me everything."

"Yes, it was hard, dearest; because, you know, I didn't think you could love me when you knew all."

"A man's love wouldn't be worth the having if he couldn't condone his loved one's faults;" he replied, kissing her tenderly before they went down to their carriage.

It was sundown by the time they returned. Maud was a little fatigued, but she appeared happy and

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gay, and she said she felt "perfectly lovely." Trench couldn't stay to dinner, but he promised to come back about nine o'clock or thereabout. She said she would wait for him until ten, anyway. But just as she was shaking hands with him at the steps, she drew back a little and paused. On the other side of the street Burwell passed; he glanced over and saw her, but, when opposite, drooped his head and appeared to be counting the number of stones in the pavement. Trench noticed it all; he saw Maud's sudden, but scarce perceptible pallor, he noticed her start, and the next moment he was taking off his hat and turning to walk homeward.

"I wish you could stay here all night;" she managed to whisper to him before he left her.

"If wishes were facts," he replied, "and facts omnipotent, the world would be ours, and we would be the happiest in the world!"

Maud went into the house, and when she took off her wraps she felt lonely. She inquired whether the doctor had called, and when the nurse said that he had, and that baby was worse, she walked into the room where he lay, looked at him, and not discerning any more alarming symptom than the stupor into which he had fallen for the last couple of days, walked out without feeling particularly disturbed over it. Then she walked into Nina's room and sat there some minutes, talking and playing with her, till it was time to change her dress for dinner.

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She felt dissatisfied still; she could not name any particular reason for it, but she felt discontented now that Trench was away from her. She hated, in any case, to sit down to dinner by herself, and this was only half past six, three hours more before he would be back. There was something wanting in his love to-day, she kept repeating to herself. She felt that want so keenly, that it made her angrily dissatisfied. She thought that, in spite of all his protestations, in spite of all his display of affection for her, there was the absence of that fervor, that impulsive sincerity with which he had caressed her before. Well, she didn't care; she'd wait and see how he acted to-night. Her discontent invariably made her defiant.

It was a little past eight. Maud was through dinner and had gone upstairs. She was sitting in the boudoir, trying to read something, while she was watchfully listening and waiting for Trench's coming. 'Twas still everywhere; a soft, bright silence reigned around her, which soothed her strained nerves. She did not think much on anything definite. She had a vague longing to have Trench come and stay there forever and ever, but she did not let her mind dwell too long on such a possibility. She was trying to get more and more engrossed in reading in order to prevent her from thinking. A vague alarm kept agitating her inwardly, alarm mingled with a triumphant sensation which was rapidly mak-

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ing her very restless. She kept looking at the pages of the book while the outlines of Burwell, and Trench and her husband kept appearing and disappearing before her, though she did not permit them to excite any emotions within her.

She had been sitting that way for several minutes. 'Twas drawing toward nine. Maud was becoming impatient, when suddenly Amy came running in, crying:

"Madam, madam! I don't know what is the matter with the baby; you had better come up and see!"

Maud jumped up, a sickening sensation oppressing her suddenly. She ran upstairs as fast as she could. She hurried toward the crib where the baby lay and near whom the nurse was standing pale and scared. Maud bent over him; he lay there still, motionlessly still. One eye was closed, the other was partially open, but there was no glitter in it. The little face was restful; his breathing?—It was still. Maud stared, and it dawned upon her that the baby was dead!

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

BENDING OVER THE DEAD BABY.

Maud remained standing and looking, as if she were riveted to the place. She stood at the foot of the crib without uttering a word. A chill ran over her body when she realized that the child lying there was lifeless; it was a chill as if coming from the breath of death, but she experienced no tumultuous sensation within her. On the contrary, she seemed suddenly possessed by a strange calm.

The Nurse, Amie, and the governess stood round her, looking solemn and pale—almost awestricken; but she was hardly conscious of their presence. The more she looked at her dead child, the more irresistible was the longing which was rapidly possessing her to touch him, lift his head and his hand, and look closer into his face; but she shrank from doing it. She felt almost a creepy sensation at the mere thought of it. Still she remained standing there, arrestingly fascinated in a strange, weird way, as if she had been suddenly brought in contact with the world of dreams and the world of darkness, where everything is done without noise or motion, surreptitiously and stealthily, as though the least disturbance would wake a terrible alarm. She could hardly be-

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lieve that the child lying there was not going momentarily to stir, to lift his hands, open his eyes, and begin to coo as she was accustomed to hear him, especially when she called him "Harry, Harry!"

Not that she was possessed by a strong desire to see him do so—she simply expected it, because she was more accustomed to it! and this silence, this terrible immobility, was something out of the usual to her. She was conscious of no yearning after him; her heart was not convulsed with sensations of pity or the passions of regret and longing. Her heart was still. Not a tear came into her eyes, and, though while he was alive he frequently excited in her the tenderest maternal instincts, now that he was dead, she seemed to feel strangely detached from him.

"When did he die?" she asked, turning to nurse. Her voice seemed strange to the women around her, and to herself, too; it had such a hollow, though intense ring in it.

"I don't know, ma'am;" the woman replied tremulously. "I came up to see him for the night, and to give him his medicine, and I found him stone-dead!" The woman was becoming lachrimose, and Maud, who did not know why—she could not account for it, beyond that it was a nervous impulse, could scarcely restrain her features from smiling.

"You'd better send Patrick for the doctor, Amie," she said, in a quiet, contained tone, and walked out of the room.

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It was curious what a sudden calm possessed her feelings! Maud was almost surprised at it, herself, and wondered whether they were not prostrate. She walked about as if in a dream; she seemed to move about mechanically, and, the strangest thing of all—she thought it painfully dreadful—was the fact that a smile kept distorting her features—a smile in which there was no humor or light, but which, do what she would, she could not banish from her face.

She could not think clearly, consecutively; she wondered what she ought to do? And again Burwell, and Trench and Harry came before her vision, faintly and confusedly. She wondered whether she ought to wire to Harry in New York, and to write Trench not to come. She wished she could make up her mind what to do; but things were in such a maze, and she could not emerge from it easily! Harry was at the banquet, and when she remembered all the gayety and merriment, all the brilliancy and pleasurable excitement this meant, she thought it would not do; that it would be too bad to disturb them all and to interrupt Harry. He'll be back to-morrow, and it will be time enough for him to know all about it when he returns home.

Again that abominable smile on her face. Then she wondered, whether it would be proper to have Trench come and whether it would not be best to write to him not to? She sat down by her escritoire and began to write. "The most dreadful thing

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happened to-night, my darling," and then she suddenly thought that this would not do at all; that if she was going to write, she ought to write to Miss Prescott. But when she looked up at the little clock and saw that it was already past nine, and that he would probably be here in a few minutes, she concluded best not to send such a note, that she needn't receive him, which would answer equally well. The man would probably be sure to miss him; she said to herself as a final argument. And she sat there thinking, and wondering what made her feel so lighthearted and at ease, and so free from all gloom, fear and distracted sorrow?

But when the bell rang she felt her heart sink; she felt herself getting cold and pale, her breath was thick, and conflicting desires and thoughts kept agitating her brain. Was that Trench? And was she to receive him or send down word that her baby was dead and she could not see him, therefore? That would sound so cold! She could see him just for a minute, just for a second, and tell it to him herself, and send him away immediately. The doctor must not find him here anyway, and she really longed to see him!

"Mr. Trench? Show him up," she said to the servant who had come in to announce him. She stood with bated breath expecting him. Such a host of tumultuous sensations were tossing her inward being of a sudden. She felt herself pale and smiling and

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not knowing just exactly what to do, and when he came into the room she threw her arms round him, kissed him passionately and in a languid, tremulous voice whispered, "How I love you, dearest!"

Trench stood silent and gravely affected. He seemed to be almost pained by something, from the clouded expression which flitted across his face. He held her in his arms, looked into her face, there was such a mingling of sorrow and happiness in it, that he was prompted to ask her gently:

"What is the matter, darling?"

"Oh, nothing!" she said with a loud sigh. "Only baby is dead; but I thought I could not help seeing you. I am all alone here, and I wanted you to kiss me, to tell me that you love me, that is all!"

"My poor darling!" exclaimed Trench, fervently moved by her pathetic accents.

"Now you must go, darling! I can't let you stay here, and I will send for you as soon as Harry comes home. Do you want to see the baby, dead? He looks so strange!" she asked in the same nervous, plaintive voice.

"Yes, if I may?"

They both walked upstairs silently, and entered the room. The nurse and Amie were still there, and they rose when their mistress came in and stood solemnly at the side of the crib. Mutely Maud and Trench looked at the dead child, his little hands were crossed over his breast, and but for that, he

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might have been mistaken for a sleeping infant. They did not say a word, or exchange even looks while they stood there. They moved off as if they were afraid to waken him from his slumbers, and, though a sigh escaped Maud's lips, there was nothing depicted on her feature to indicate that she was conscious of any agitation of feelings. Even her nervous smile had disappeared.

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CHAPTER XLIX.

BURWELL'S LAST MOVE.

Trench walked down the steps and started for home with a heart laden with pity for Maud, combating the host of considerations which lately had been occupying his mind. His heart yearned for different conditions and he longed passionately to be able to change everything that had already come to pass, to forget all her past, to obliterate that present which imposed on him so many duties different from what his impulses prompted him to do. He longed to be able to take up Maud and carry her away from everybody and everything, and tend on her, and help her, and restore her to her pristine purity; she had so much of womanly goodness in her nature!

But he had not walked many steps when his thoughts were interrupted by somebody calling him, and the next moment he was overtaken by Burwell.

Trench scowled; Burwell 's sudden appearance near him provoked him, and he felt a little anger mounting his brain.

"What is it?" he asked sternly, standing still.

"Don't be angry, Mr. Trench!" Burwell replied huskily. "I don't mean any harm, I want to talk to you!"

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"Well?"

"I can't, this way! Come along over to the Gardens, let's sit down; I don't mean any harm, I assure you! You must listen to me!"

"Very well!" said Trench, crossing the street to walk over to the Gardens. Burwell followed him.

"Oh, yes!" the latter broke out when they were entering the Gardens, as if he were continuing a train of thoughts. "I watched you, I saw you go in and come out; I did not mean anything. Only I knew you would come to-night, and I waited for you! Let's sit down here, this is secluded enough. I met Patrick and he told me the baby was dead, so I knew you would be there!" They had been walking at a rapid pace, but Burwell's hurried accents did not seem the effect of their fast walking; he was evidently terribly unnerved.

"Well, what did you want to say to me?" asked Trench. "That you saw me come in and go out from the St. Johns, that you were watching me—is that all?" he asked in a metallic but stern tone.

"No; that isn't all!" replied Burwell, as if gasping for breath. "But that child,—that child, I tell you she has poisoned him, or killed him!"

Trench felt his flesh creep. He turned around and looked Burwell in the face. It was blanched, his eyes were wild and wandering. The moon shone serenely in the heavens and threw a pale, soft light on his features—they were permeated with passion-

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ate sorrow and despair. Everything around them stood still and peaceful, as if lulled by the silvery light of the moon into an enchanted repose. Trench hardly knew what to answer, or what to say. He looked at Burwell, and almost unconsciously let the words escape him slowly:

"Mr. Burwell—you are mad!'

"Yes, I am! You told me once in the same way that I was drunk. I was mad then; I was mad from the first moment I loved her, and you will be mad before you cease to love her! I love her still—you see I must be mad! Oh, you don't know her yet, as I do!" he went on. "Do you know what a vampire is? A creature that fastens on you, clings to you, sucks your blood—your very life blood, and then leaves you a mangled, hollow carcass! You are startled? I tell you I know her better than you do!

"If I didn't think you mad, Mr. Burwell, I would think myself justified in killing you!" said Trench in a strange voice.

"I wish you would! Do, for heaven's sake, have pity on me, and kill me! Maud would like it! She would love you longer for it!"

"If that's all you've got to tell me, Mr. Burwell, I bid you good-night!" interrupted Trench, rising to go. Burwell caught hold of his coat and held him.

"Stay! for heaven's sake, stay and hear me! Can't you have patience with me? Haven't you triumphed enough over my misery? Tell me one

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thing!" he said, when he prevailed on Trench to sit down, "Are you going to take her away to-night?"

"I don't think I want to hear anything you are going to say to me!" said Trench, making another move to go.

"You don't like to tell me? I am not surprised! But sit down, please. I know you are going away with her, and that, therefore, she has been destroying all the records of her past. I know Maud! I am not jealous, no! I am only madly in love with her still; that's all. Who wouldn't be whom she has ever loved? Look at Harry! God, how she loved me! She'll never love you any more that she did me, Mr. Trench; she couldn't do that! And no matter what you do, your love could not vie with mine. Well, you are going to take her away from us all, and you are going to make so many people miserable; that's all right. Every man has his own duties in life, and one's own happiness couldn't take anybody else into consideration. I know what the wealth of Maud's tenderness is. God, how I wish I could never think of it! But she'll change to you; she'll deceive you, she'll forget you, and jilt you as she has done all of us. You cannot tie her to yourself with anything in the world, neither with heaven or earth—I know that. I know that pretty well,—" and Burwell suddenly stopped, bent his head put his hands to his forehead, and sat there, that way, for a second or two. Trench watched him

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with a peculiar feeling of curiosity and compassion, his imagination wandering over Maud's past.

"Great God!" exclaimed Burwell, rising suddenly and facing Trench. "How she loved me. Why, if you could only read this letter that I have with me, it was just before the baby was born, if you could only read it, you would think Maud to be made of the tenderest human heart! Believe her? You would sooner deny the heavens than doubt one word of hers! You would sooner believe eternity coming to an end than that her love could ever change! *I* did. I was mad! So will you be, one of these days. You see, she spurns me, hates me, insults me, throws me over for you, kills her own child to get rid of me, and yet, I still love her more than all the world, more than all my life! I can't endure it;" and Burwell turned away and hid his face in his hands. Trench sat there without moving. Passersby looked on the two young men, but they walked on, without noticing anything. Burwell, though he talked vehemently, was careful not to raise his voice too loud.

"Last night," Burwell resumed in a calmer voice, "I wanted to kill her. She came to my rooms and, while I was away, took back her letters which she had written to me. I thought it best to kill her. I put bullets in my revolver and said to myself, it would be the best way to end matters for everybody! If she lives longer, she'll make more people miserable! I thought there was no one in the world

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who had a greater right than I to do that! But I don't want it now! I want other people to suffer as I do now. I want them to experience all these agonies! I reflected, and I couldn't do it! I thought of her children; the baby was a consideration to me. Well, he is dead now! If I had killed her this morning, the baby would have lived! You see, I spared her, and I want you to spare her, too! You'll have pity on all those people, won't you? On Harry, and Miss Prescott, and little Nina! They are all guiltless, and good and innocent. I am going away somewhere, out of the world, anywhere; so it isn't for me that I am begging you! But she doesn't know what she is doing, and you won't be happy long! It will only last a little while, a very little while! Pity——"

"Good-night, Mr. Burwell!" said Trench, abruptly rising and interrupting him, and, before Burwell had time to stop him, Trench had walked off at a brisk pace homeward.

Burwell sat as if stunned, for a few moments, then he thought piteously to himself:

"He doesn't mind it at all! None of them care. Oh, merciful heavens! How I hate to have to break Harry's heart!" and he rose and walked once more by the St. John residence, scanning the lighted windows and watching the shadows move about; and then he went to his rooms, opened his desk and began to write:

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"DEAR HARRY:

"I am going away never to return to Boston, at least, not till you teach me to forget my shame and my treachery to you and yours. I do not know what to say or what to do. I still love Maud with a frenzied passion, and how she has loved me, you will see from the enclosed letter. She loves another man now, and possibly, before this reaches you she will have left your house never to return. I cannot ask you to forgive me, but for heaven's sake, Harry, be lenient in your judgment of one who has already been made to suffer agonies for his actions. If you knew all, you might realize how much I have sacrificed of my personal feelings to spare you additional trouble, and I am only writing this to you, that, in case there is still time, it might be of assistance to you in framing the course of your actions. Maud has such goodness in her nature!

F. B."

He read it over again and again, put Maud's letter in it, kissed it convulsively, sealed it up, and went out to mail it.

"There it goes!" he said to himself, throwing the letter into the box. "Everything is finished! Good-bye, world!"

He stood for a second there, conscious, suddenly, of an inexpressibly sad feeling. For a moment or two his mind was a perfect blank, then he turned round and almost involuntarily walked toward the

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St. John residence. He passed the house, looked up at it, not without a suspicion of fear in his heart. He saw somebody come out from it, and from the carriage at the door, he recognized that it must have been the doctor. Then, with a loud sigh expressive of the realization that henceforth he was a stranger to that place, he walked homeward.

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CHAPTER L.

MAUD'S ORDEAL.

When the doctor left, Maud felt strongly tempted to wire to Harry, after all; but her former reflections, mingling with an indecision as to what she herself was to do now, kept her once more from sending for him. Besides, the telegram would not reach him till late, and he could hardly have time to catch the midnight train, and it would be useless. Maud felt very lonely. Now that everyone had gone, she experienced a heavy loneliness, an oppressive restlessness, which, in another temperament, might have been identified with positive fear. Somehow, she thought, the whole house was more silent than usual, and everything seemed inexplicably hushed. She was still in her ante-room, sitting and writing notes to different people, and when she finished them and rang for the man to take them out and mail them, and he also had gone, she felt strangely uncomfortable. She did not know what to do, and how to behave under the circumstances. She had never experienced the ordeal—a death in a household—and though she had been to funerals and that sort of thing, they were mostly those of grown-up people, and she wondered

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whether babies required the same ceremonies. She felt somewhat nervous in that brilliantly-lighted room; she experienced almost a timidity agitating her feelings, the longer she sat there, so she got up quickly and walked upstairs to her bedroom.

Maud could not fall asleep for a long time. She lay there staring at the darkness, thinking and thinking. She wondered why she was not shocked and agitated; why she was not sorry for little Harry's death? For, while the baby lived, she was frequently conscious of a strong fondness for him. She was quite calm about it all. Thoughts crowded upon her mind, visions flitted before her imagination, but she reviewed and received them as if they were the inevitable, of which Trench had said there was no use worrying or trying to escape, since fate had all time to support its patience. Well, what was going to happen now? Of course, that man Burwell will think all sorts of things, and will be driven now to do everything he possibly can do.

Well,—well? she asked herself, impatiently tossing on her pillow, and conscious of a defiant sensation rapidly setting her brain on fire. What was there to be done? Suppose Harry should know it and believe it? Burwell was so crazy, he was sure to think her responsible for baby's death, and he is likely to go and tell him everything about it. Of course, she could not remain here; she would have to go away. What would Harry do? She did not know; she was

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perplexed in trying to surmise it. He was so good, so kind, so considerate, so manly in his bearing toward her, so patient with all her whims and caprices! But these were just the men you couldn't rely upon, once they were roused, she thought to herself, with a secret misgiving. Not that she feared that Harry would raise a public scandal—nothing of the sort! She knew the mold in which St. John's temper was cast, and she was perfectly secure of the fact that he would shrink more violently from such a contingency than anyone else she knew of—than even herself! But she couldn't meet him, she couldn't look him in the eyes, she couldn't endure his silent reproaches, with which he was sure to regard her; she could not stand by and witness him pained—she couldn't do that!

Then she thought again. Why not tell everything to Trench and ask him to take her away from all this? No, she couldn't bring herself to do that either! In fact, she was almost conscious of a dread when that flashed across her mind. She shrank instinctively from letting Trench know everything, and the subject of the baby must remain a secret to him. Somehow, she had a violent misgiving on that subject. She felt that Trench was made of a stern, hard mold which was not even pliable enough to yield to his strongest inclinations if the elements of his nature were violently opposed to something; she was conscious that the limitations of his sympathies

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had some affinities with those of her own, and that there were some things which he could not forgive. This was one of the things. To confess to have had a lover was a comparatively easy task with what it was, when she thought that she would have to tell him about the baby. No, she could not do it; and, what is more, he must not know it!

She became very restless the more she thought of it. She wondered whether she would have time enough to prevent him from learning it, as she hated the very possibility of his getting to know it before she had time to move in the matter. What a fool she was not to have kept him there in the house. What did she care? Wasn't she his? There was nothing else left for her to do, but to go away with him, and she regretted that she had not gone away that night he spoke to her; it would have saved so much trouble. Well, it was all that fool of a Burwell's doings; she didn't care! Heaven knows how different she tried to be!

And as if suddenly possessed by an inexplicable access of sorrowful emotions, she burst into a flood of tears....

....It is a long time before she falls asleep. And in her sleep, she does not know how it all happens, but she sees a mysteriously dark room before her; she is in the room and the darkness is perfectly black at first. Then there are images there, people all made of a pale light, as if they were all white, very

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white, and had the rays of the sun transfusing them with a golden light. That is what those people are made of! They keep coming and multiplying, and they all keep congregating round something, without saying one word or making the least noise. She can not see what it is they are all looking at, but each of these beings as they approach it, look down, then they direct their eyes on her for a second or two, and pass out solemnly. She feels very uncomfortable under that stare of those strange people. She winces each time she encounters those eyes, but she does not feel indignant or angry. She sits there, as if she were compelled to sit there by some fatality, and she keeps repeating to herself: "There is no use trying to escape the inevitable, the inevitable has the wings of time with which to overtake you."....

Then those mysterious beings disappear, one by one; they leave the room in the same stealthy and surreptitious way in which they entered, and the room is left deserted. But she dreads to turn round and look. She imagines every moment somebody is stirring, somebody is moving, and she is possessed by an inexplicable terror.

It is dark, black, and silent as the grave! Slowly, fearfully she turns her head in the direction where those beings had disappeared and, for a moment she feels relieved. She sees nothing. Then there is a faint glimmer of light. Somebody is standing, bending

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over something, peering down cautiously with candle in one hand, which is shaded by the other so as to concentrate the light on the object he is looking at. She looks too and sees a pale face, with the hue of death on its brow. There's something red; it is blood oozing from his forehead; the eyes are closed, the body is stretched on a table, and the next moment she is seized with a convulsive terror, when it dawns upon her that the dead face is that of Trench, and the man bending over him is Burwell.....

A wave of darkness rolls over that vision, and she dreams again. She dreams that she had been very happy; that she had been very gay, and now it is late at night and everything is over. She is still sitting in her ball dress, but something so heavy is oppressing her heart that she feels she will go distracted with the poignancy of some terrible grief. She is going to die—she knows she is! It is that inevitable which you cannot escape, and she wants so much to live, if only another year, another month, another week, even! But no, she must die!

They are doing something in the next room; she hears them hammering at something, and each blow echoes in her heart with a sickening sensation, and she cannot even cry to relieve the horribly oppressive feeling with which she is weighed down.

Then she sees some one coming in, lugging something. It is Harry, carrying a big coffin which he

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lets drop on the floor and goes out, without saying a word to her. She is alone sitting there, consumed with sorrow and terror and, as she looks at the coffin, she begins to take off her dress. Oh, it looks so pretty! and she is so handsome in it! and she feels such a gust of grief sweep over her when she drops her jewels on the floor! When, suddenly, she sees Burwell before her, standing with the same candle in his hand, looking down on the coffin. And it dawns upon her that he has come to kill her, too, as he has killed Trench; and she trembles with terror, but he looks up to her and says, "I'm only come to look at our baby. Don't be afraid! I have not killed that man, there he is!" and with a sudden bound she leaps into Trench's arms screaming, "Save me! Oh, save me!"....

Maud woke up with a start. It was dark around her, and for a second or two she did not realize where she was. She kept staring at the darkness, the images and pictures of her dream still vivid in her mind, still conscious of the effect her emotions had excited in her, and she knew she had been crying. Goodness! what a relief it was to find out where she was and that all that ghastly thing was but a dream! But the reaction of her sensation of relief rapidly expended its force, and the next moment the reality of her present situation returned to her with a more oppressive energy than it had before she fell asleep. The dream had left imprints

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on her memory and some of its incidents were fast becoming realities to her. She was very nervous; she thought once or twice that she heard breathing near her or coming from the next room and, at one time, her heart stood still when she thought that it was baby's husky and heavy breathing.—She listened,—but she could see baby lying still and breathless in his crib upstairs, and the picture appeared gruesome to her. She got up and lit the gas, looked into the other room, went into her dressing-room, and reassuring herself that neither ghosts nor men had intruded there, she went back to her bed.

But she did not turn down the lights. She lay there thinking; she could not force from her imagination the images of Burwell and Trench which she had seen in the dream. Burwell was mad; he will be desperate when he hears of baby's death! What will he do? What won't he do? She knew him capable of everything, and the more she revolved on the probabilities staring her in the future, the more conclusively she thought that the best issue for her from all this was to go away with Trench. She would have time to do that before Harry returned. She must do it before he comes back, for she might fail in courage when she faced him, and Burwell might anticipate her, then, in everything!

Maud only succumbed to the slumber which exhaustion forced upon her, and when she woke up and found the light of day struggling to penetrate

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her curtains, she felt buoyantly glad. Now that she had resolved upon a course of action, she awaited with feverish anxiety for the opportunity to execute it. When she rang the bell and Amie came to her with rolls and coffee, contrary to her custom of staying in bed, then, for an hour or two later, she said that she would dress at once and to order the carriage for half-past ten. As soon as she was dressed, she ran downstairs, opened her escritoire and wrote the following note to Trench:

"My Darling: You said once that you would not consider me your very own till I could go away with you and sever myself from my past and present, and, I hesitated then. I had so much to consider. The happiness of so many depended on my actions. I had to think it all over. I have found out now that by my staying here, I only make myself intolerably miserable without being able to spare anyone any pain. You said that one cannot escape the inevitable; well, I have discovered that you are my fate. Since you have come here, dearest, everything has gone differently, everything has changed and pointed that I can only find my safety in your love. Please, love, do not think me cruel, if I could write this note while my baby lies dead, upstairs! It is only one tie less to keep me from you any further, and I will go with you at once, anywhere you choose to take me. Only we must leave before Harry returns,

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She sealed it, and ringing for a servant, she handed it with instructions to wait for an answer. She scribbled a note to her sister, whom she expected soon, to say that she had to go out to make arrangements for things and that she wouldn't be back before five o'clock. When she closed it, she thought, "Five o'clock will leave irrecoverable miles between this place and myself!" She left instructions that she would see no one that day, not a single soul and when, suddenly, Nina ran into the room with a puckered little face and eyes glistening with tears, she caught her up, kissed her fervently, and said, "Crying for Harry, child? You are sorry that he is dead, aren't you, dear? There, there, now; don't cry any more! Come, I'll take you out driving with me!"

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CHAPTER LI.

TRENCH IN PERPLEXITY.

Trench was in a very perplexed state of mind when he received Maud's note. He was sitting, at that moment, talking to Miss Prescott quietly and pleasantly, though he had been troubled with a presentiment of something impending. He excused himself, glanced over the note and, hardly believing its contents, he read it over more carefully, and then tried to resume the conversation as if nothing of importance had transpired. He looked up and wondered whether Miss Prescott suspected him of anything, whether he had betrayed himself in any wise. But though he talked, he hardly understood what was said to him, as he scarcely comprehended what he was driving at himself. Somehow, he felt he ought to tell something to Miss Prescott about that note and he was raking his brain what best to concoct, but he found, he positively could not do it! He essayed once or twice to say something utterly foreign to the subject of the note, but he only ended in making Miss Prescott look at him with her large inquisitive eyes; he thought she looked a shade paler, she certainly became more contained in manner, and then, she interrupted him by asking quietly:

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"Have you got to go to Mrs. St. John? Don't let me interfere with you, Mr. Trench! I thought, myself, of calling in an hour or two. Poor Mrs. St. John! She must be distracted with baby dying while Mr. St. John is away."

"Do you believe people could go distracted with grief, Miss Prescott?" asked Trench, suddenly. "You know, I always thought it was only a figure of speech, till I came to this country."

"I am very sorry,"—Miss Preseott started out saying, when they were interrupted by the entrance of the servant, who asked Treneh whether there was an answer, as the man was still waiting. Trench jumped up, excused himself, and ran up into his room. His mind was confused. He scarcely believed his own senses. He looked over the note once more. It read to him so strange; the magnitude of the action proposed there, was so important, was so overwhelming to his imagination, that he did not believe anybody could have written so calmly about it.

True, he had once proposed it to her; nay, had stipulated it to her as a condition of their love. Well, he would have taken her then and there. But that was several weeks ago, before he knew anything or anybody; before St. John and Burwell were of any consideration to him; before there was a dead baby; and, besides, what would the Prescotts think, what would Miss Prescott say? The weakest inclination is always ready with the strongest excuse for doing as

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it wants. All these people and things kept whirling before him, and he did not know what to do. He paced up and down the room once or twice, sat down to write something of which he had not formed a single definite idea in his mind, and then, he jumped up from his chair, ran downstairs and told the man to tell Mrs. St. John that he would be ther as soon as he possibly could. Then, he excused himself to Miss Prescott and walked out of the house.

It was a sunny, cheerful, warm day. The atmosphere was pregnant with that freshness peculiar to spring; the trees on the common were already green and leafy, and, as he walked along he thought God's great world looked beautiful!

Trench was not happy. He felt far from it when he strolled down Beacon street. In front of him stretched a vista of stately houses on one side, trees on the other, and a blue haze in the distance; but he was not looking at the scenery, He was thinking of Maud, and what he was to do now. He knew, a month ago, and he would not have hesitated a second; but that month had wrought such a change within him that he was compelled to pause,—he was conscious of alarm at the very proposal of their flight. He had so much to consider—St. John's friendship, the Prescotts, his own reputation. But that wasn't it. It might have entered as an element into his thoughts, but it was Maud herself who made him hesitate and doubt.

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Would Maud be happy with him? Would he be happy with her? Was this worth so much? he kept asking himself. He could not help recalling Burwell's words, "Your happiness will last so little, will be so short; you'll soon be as miserable as I am!" He had been revolving those words in his mind the whole of last evening, and spent most of the night in thinking over what Burwell said. Strange, how forcibly Burwell had affected his attitude toward Maud! Spite of the fact that he knew most of her life, in spite of what she had confessed to him, it was not till Burwell loomed up before him and asserted the rights of his relations, that her image became marred to him, that her love lost most of its poesy to him. And even that night would not have worked such a powerful influence on his sensibilities; the presence and existence of a lover in the shape of Burwell might have gradually been dwindled down to something of an unpleasant nature, but which strictly belonged to the past, and had nothing to do with the present. All this might have been possible, but his meeting of last night with Burwell had raised up something between them which nothing could remedy.

It was all the difference between an unpleasant theory and a repellant actuality which Trench experienced to have taken place, within him, after what Burwell had said to him that night. Of course, it was not true what he implied about her killing the

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baby. That was the ravings of a lunatic. But he did not doubt anything else that Burwell said about it. He lay thinking over it a long time, last night, and kept asking himself repeatedly, "Is it possible for me to love such a woman?"

He pondered over her past, and began to doubt seriously whether she loved him at all in the present; whether it was not only a sally of her passions, an infatuation, which might not even last as long as her former love affairs had. Apart from everything, he had lost that tender regard for her which he entertained when he first knew her, when he first met her. He was no longer conscious of any such sentiment, and he kept looking at her boldly, critically, frankly; and all her charms, all the roundness of her beauty, the delicacy of her womanhood—all this was becoming pale and meager and starved!

Trench had not yet come to a conclusion what to do next. He had already definitely resolved not to take her away from her home, and her husband; he could not do it on account of Miss Prescott alone. But he did not know how to extricate himself from the position he found himself in. He felt the impulse of his sense of honor, of his sympathies inclining him one way, while the most salutary considerations and the most imperious of reasoning commanded him to act differently. He wished, so much, he could tell Miss Prescott about it; he was sure she would tell him just what to do. He really had a mind to go

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and tell her everything and let her decide what was right for him to do under the circumstances. But he paused, he reflected, and then, concluded that he must best stay away from her as long as all this was in abeyance, otherwise he might speak of things which nobody but Maud ought to know. What was there to be done? He had been strolling for over an hour, and the time was drawing near, when, if he intended to go away this afternoon, he ought to have been at his rooms, now, engaged in packing and other preparations.

Suddenly he turned round and walked at a rapid pace homeward. It was like an inspiration, the resolution was, with which he was all at once animated. He walked up to his room, wrote a long letter, addressed it to Mrs. St. John, and asked the servant to take it to Mrs. St. John's. Then he walked into the library where he found Miss Prescott who had just returned from calling on Mrs. St. John.

"Why, what do you think, Mr. Trench?" she asked when he entered. "I called at Mrs. St. John's and was told she was out and would not see anybody to-day. Have you seen her, how is she?"

"I haven't seen Mrs. St. John to-day, Miss Prescott!" he replied solemnly. "And, do you know what I am going to ask you?"

"I can't imagine!"

"Only to release me from that promise I gave you, the other day, about not leaving Boston so soon.

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I ought to go; it'll be better for everybody if I return to where I belong, Miss Prescott. Will you trust me—that it is better so?"

"Yes, Mr. Trench!"

"Then I ought to go at once; I ought to have gone away months ago!"

"Do you think it's fair, Mr. Trench, to leave a woman when she needs most of what you can give to her, be to her?"

'Please, Miss Prescott, trust me! Believe me that I have taken most things into consideration."

"When do you want to go?"

"As soon as possible; to-morrow or the day after, as soon as I get a steamer to take me over. You'll forgive me, won't you, Miss Prescott?"

"I have nothing to forgive, Mr. Trench! So you're possibly going to-morrow?"

"Yes, I think I shall! You see I have always a good excuse for going; they have urged for my return weeks ago. Oh, I do wish I could tell you everything!"

"It would not help me very much, Mr. Trench!" she replied in such a sad, almost tremulous voice that Trench looked up in surprise and stood staring at her. But before he could say anything she moved off, and with an effort at smiling added, "Well, *bon voyage!*" and walked out of the room.

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CHAPTER LII.

PREPARING TO GO AWAY.

Maud, when she returned home, told Nina to go upstairs to governess, while she walked into her ante-room, expecting to find the answer which Trench was to send her. When she did not find it in the place she looked, she rang the bell and asked Patrick, where he had left the answer for which she instructed him to wait. Patrick was so stupid and was always forgetting to obey instructions!

"There was no answer, Madam! Mr. Trench said he would be here as soon as possible!" replied Patrick.

"As soon as possible? Are you sure he said that?"

"Yes, Madam; them is the words he said."

"Well, Patrick, tell everybody that I am not at home and can't see anybody, no matter who it is, do you understand? Except Mr. Trench; he'll be here by two o'clock!"

The man left and Maud walked upstairs into her room. She felt more matter-of-fact than sorry. In an hour or two she was going to leave all this, and, somehow, she could not conjure up the emotions of regret with which, she thought, she would be pos-

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sessed when she really decided upon such a step. Probably, she thought, she had suffered so much for the last few days, and the surcease of sorrow had exhausted all her feelings. She tried to think very sadly of all this; she held up to her vision the picture of grief which Harry would present, the helpless tears of Nina, the consternation of their friends and relatives, the commotion in society, the sensation in the country, the maddening rage of Burwell.

Here she was, one of the leaders of Boston society, a member of the best families of New England, the wife of one of the richest and most respected of men in the state, the mother of a lovely child, the most conspicuous of Boston's women leaving home, husband, child, wealth and reputation behind her, renouncing all this and going away with another man when one of her children lay dead in his crib! It was a startlingly pathetic picture to her; but, somehow, her emotions remained undisturbed, and she looked on all this with a comparative calmness that was inexplicable to herself!

One thing, she thought, was very fortunate, and that was: the check Harry had left her yesterday. She had not cashed it until this morning and she had the whole cum intact in a cute, little bag which she thought she would hand to Trench the moment he came in. She had not decided where to go yet, but if they could catch a steamer to-morrow or to-night, or as soon as possible sailing for Europe, they should

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do so. She would not take very many things with her—her jewels of course; she would take those, and only a couple of dresses and that sort of thing. She must not have too much baggage with her, it was always an impediment and she did wish she could take Amie with her. She wondered whether she should? It was getting late, and she really had not much time to lose in gathering up her things. She rang the bell, and when Amie came in she ordered her to pack up one of her trunks with dresses and things, not to forget anything that was indispensable, and then, as if suddenly impelled by an idea, she stopped and said:

"Amie, you have been a very good girl to me—would you like to go away with me?"

Amie, who had been packing, glanced at her mistress, a pallor covering her face, and said falteringly:

"Yes, Madam!"

"Never to return here, Amie?"

"I will go with you anywhere, Madame; you have been very kind!"

"Well, don't say a word! Pack up your things and mine, and have them all ready by two o'clock. I'll go down to have some luncheon!" And she turned to walk out of the room.

"And Nina, Madame? Shall I have Nina ready, too?" asked Amie hesitatingly.

"Nina? N-no, Amie, the child remains here!" And she shut the door behind her.

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She was sorry to leave Nina. She wished she could take her with them. She'll miss her so much! Tears started to Maud's eyes as she reflected on the separation between Nina and herself. Nina was so bright and pretty, and she imagined there will be times when she'll just hunger to have her child's dimpled, warm face press against hers; but she must not do it! She must leave her with Harry; he doted on her, and she had no right to take away everything from him!

It was drawing near the time when she was beginning to wait for Trench's arrival, so she got up from the table and walked into her boudoir. She rang the bell and ordered to have Nina brought down to her, and when the child came down, she called her nearer to her, put her hands on her head and kissed her ardently on her tiny lips. The child threw her arms around her mother's neck and clung to her, tacitly at first; then she began to kiss her rapturously on her eyes, her cheeks, her forehead, her lips, her ears, her neck and everywhere. Nina was delighted and laughed so silvery and clear, and she responded with such exuberance to her mother's affection that Maud was touched to the quick, her eyes were rapidly filling with tears and she thought it best to send out Nina from the room.

"Nina, dear!" Maud said, still holding her child in her arms, "You'll be a very, very good child, won't you? And you'll always love mamma and be

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very good to papa, won't you? Kiss me once more! There, you wear this!" and she took off a string of pearls which she wore on her own neck, and was putting it on the child, when suddenly Nina exclaimed: "Mamma! mamma! Please don't cwy! What are you cwying fow? Peese, Mamma, don't cwy!" she added as in great distress.

"I am not crying, you silly child!" replied Maud tenderly and with an effort at smiling. "There, now —that looks very pretty!" and suddenly glancing over the mantelpiece and noticing that the hands of the clock pointed to two, she said more calmly: "Now, Nina, you must go upstairs. Good-by! Kiss me, dear!" and she folded her child within her arms, pressed her against her breast, while she held her lips sealed on the golden head in a long, long kiss. "Now run upstairs, dear!" she said, loosening Nina from her embrace and leading her to the door. "Good-bye!" she added, as the child was disappearing upstairs.

"God forgive me for doing all this!" she said to herself returning to the boudoir, a wave of emotion forcing tears to her eyes. "They'll never know what pangs it cost me to leave them—they never will!" and she felt strangely sad that they shouldn't.

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CHAPTER LIII.

A RUDE DISILLUSION!

It was already past the time when Trench was to have come. Immediately the hands pointed to two, she expected to hear the doorbell, she expected to hear Trench's footsteps, and he had not come yet! She stood, at first, staring on the River, seeing nothing but an expanse of sunlit waters, her mind far away and entangled in confused images, her being all expectant. Then she walked downstairs into the front reception room and sat down by the window, looking, watching and waiting. Only a little of the blind was up, and she had her face almost glued to the glass, twisting her eyes in the direction where she expected him to come from, not seeing anybody passing, and careful not to be seen. She was deaf to all sounds, blind to all objects but those she was so eagerly expecting. She was getting restless, nervous, irritable. It was already twenty minutes past the time, and not a sign of him. Her impatience was rapidly mingling with a presentiment of alarm;—she did not know what to think! Harry would be back probably by three or four, five at the latest and he would be home soon and, then,—everything would be at an

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end! She could never summon up courage again to the point she had done this time, she could never excite so much resolution within her, and it'll serve him right! She thought, feeling provoked.

How could he possibly be so late and so demiss in coming? She really had a mind to go upstairs and tell Amie that they weren't going at all. And, then, Harry? And what would happen if she remained here? Burwell was sure to go and tell him, he was sure to do something,—and this reminded her, why had not Burwell called to-day? She expected him. He was sure to have heard all about the baby's death by this time, it was all over town; and it was with a secret dread that she had expected him to present himself suddenly before her, and demand an explanation, an account of the child's life. But he had not called yet, she had not seen him anywhere while out driving in the morning. Good God! was it possible the dream had come true? Was it possible he had murdered Trench? But that was improbable, that could not be! She cried to herself vehemently; oh, no, that could not be! she kept repeating to herself, the thought itself making her flesh creep and her teeth chatter. Still, why did he not come? It was nearly three o'clock and no sign of him anywhere! She will go distracted, she thought, feeling that she was almost riveted to the place with anxious eagerness to behold his approach. How could he, could he, be so cruel and let her wait so long?

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Suddenly she heard the hall door opened. She had not heard the bell, her thoughts were so loud! She had not seen anybody pass the window, anybody that she knew; her eyes were so searchingly watchful for Trench. The next moment Patrick came in and handed her a note. She recognized Trench's handwriting and, with beating heart and trembling hands, she opened it and read it; the letters dancing before her all the while in wild confusion, the sense of it hardly intelligible, but the meaning so overwhelmingly clear to her, so cruelly plain to her mind, she could hardly get through it!

"My dearest," it ran, "I hardly know what to write or what to say to you at the present moment. For the last couple of hours I have been walking about, as if one dazed. What am I to do? How I hate to pain you, or disappoint you, but you must not go away with me, you must not leave your home for me! I know I cannot make you happy; our happiness, at its best, would be but miserably short lived, and the step taken now would be irrevocable and irretrievable for you. I know all; Burwell told me everything, but that is not it. I have thought over it, I have deliberated, debated it with myself, and, believe me, it is mostly for your own good that I have decided it best for us to part. You will survive and outlive the moments, or even days, of sorrow which our parting will cause you; it will be soon a thing of the past, and you will

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have a future to console you. I must not rob you of that; I know I urged you to go away with me once, and not long ago, too! But we must both thank heaven that our better fate was proof against our mad impulses. You are still good, Maud! You have still that in your nature which could make you the blessing of the man who is most devoted to you. I have sinned against you, I know, but not so much as I might have. Forgive me, dearest. I loved you; Heaven knows I loved you!"

Maud could not finish reading it. She staggered upstairs, and thought her heart would burst before she reached her room. When she entered, she found Amie dressed for the journey, the trunk packed, and Nina standing wrapped in a little traveling cloak, and holding Amie's hand. Both of them looked at her appealingly, and when Maud closed the door behind her, Amie said, falteringly:

"I have dressed Nina and packed her things to take her with us. Madam will forgive me; the little one nearly broke her heart crying, and I thought you would be happier if you had her with you."

"Oh, Amie, Amie!" cried Maud, in a distressed voice. "We are not going at all. Leave me now, oh, leave me!" she cried out, almost beseechingly, and as soon as Amie disappeared, with Nina, she fell on her bed and burst into tears.

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CHAPTER LIV.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

She did not know how long she lay there, how long she had been crying, what she was doing. She was not conscious of anything. Everything was a blank to her; all around her was darkness and oppressiveness, and hideously still. She lay there, her face buried in her pillow; and, long after she had ceased sobbing, she still felt as if her heart would snap in twain.

Suddenly she felt somebody touch her, somebody's hand lay on her shoulder; she turned round with a start, and saw Harry bending over her. She looked up, his face was gentle, sad; he looked almost heartbroken himself.

"Were you asleep, Maud?" he asked softly. "Poor you! you must have suffered so much! You have been crying!" and he passed his hand over her eyes. Maud's heart yearned with pity for him.

"Then you know that baby is dead?" she asked, sitting up.

"Yes, I know; I have seen him! I only stayed in the office a very few minutes; how you must have suffered!" he added again with touching tenderness. Maud was unable to control her emotions any longer.

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"Don't, don't pity me so, Harry! Please don't, it will drive me distracted; I am not worth it! And please, please Harry, don't worry about that baby; it was the inevitable, and we cannot escape the inevitable!" she said, conscious that she was quoting Trench. "Please, you won't worry, and you won't be sorry, and you won't break your heart? Please, promise me that you won't!"

"Why, no! I won't worry more than I could help it, why should I? It is no use; I cannot bring him back to life, can I? I would cry till doomsday if I could; but as it is I haven't shed a tear, Maud!" he added in a quivering voice. Maud could restrain herself no longer.

"Harry!" she cried, choking almost with emotion. "Harry, I can't stand it any longer! I can't let you suffer any more, or feel for that child, and break your heart over his death! That child, Harry, was not yours, it was Burwell's!"

"Maud! For heaven's sake, Maud!" he exclaimed, jumping up from his seat, getting terribly pale, and grasping her convulsively by the hand. She had also jumped up, her brain was on wild fire, her emotions were raging within her like a tempest; she could scarcely breathe quick enough to utter all that came to her mind.

"I couldn't help it, Harry, I couldn't help it!" she cried in vehement distress. "I tried to tell you. I tried to let you know, I struggled, I suffered, God

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knows how I have suffered; but I couldn't bring myself to do it. I cheated you, abused you, deceived you, wronged you; but I couldn't bring myself to tell it to you all! I don't know what possessed me; it was fate, it was madness, it was the devil! I don't know, but I have outraged all my senses of womanhood, violated all your trust and confidence in me! I have been a false wife, a cruel mother, and an abandoned woman! Good God! why did I not die,why did I not die?" and she flung herself on her knees and cried convulsively, repeating in muffled tones, "Why did I not die, why did I not die?"

St. John stood there looking at her, his heart almost rent to pieces; then he dropped into a chair, and hiding his head in his hands he groaned out:

"Great God, that I should have come to this!"

"Oh, Harry, if you only knew how heartless, and wicked, and thoughtless I have been!" she cried again, standing up. "From the moment I married you, I began to deceive you. You were not alone, I deceived everybody, the whole world! Look! you see this trunk? I was going away with another man, if he had only taken me. But he didn't come, and I stayed here to tell you everything, everything, Harry, and you won't feel sorry when I go away! Why do you sit there and hide your head? Why don't you stand up and strike me, and curse me, and kill me, and trample on me? Why don't you kill me?

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For heaven's sake, Harry, why don't you kill me?—I am a thing not fit to live, not worth the name of woman,—oh, oh!" and she knelt down again and wept passionately.

All of a sudden St. John stood up and straightened himself. He walked over to where she was kneeling, bent over her and putting his hand on her, he called:

"Maud!" Maud!"

She rose and turned her piteous face toward him.

'Are you going to kill me?" she asked in a heart-rending voice.

"For heaven's sake, Maud, don't talk like that! Don't, if you have the least pity for me! Come, give me your hand, Maud!"

She stretched out her hand and he led her toward a chair and made her sit down.

"You are not going to leave me, Maud, are you? You are not going to leave us all, are you?"

"I must! I cannot stay here!" she said tearfully, her face averted from him and covered with her hands.

"Please, Maud, be merciful to us all! I don't know that I can plead with you, I have got nothing to appeal to you by! But if you have ever thought anything of our union, of our child, you will relent and stay here."

"No—oh, no! You don't want me! I should only mar Nina's life and make you wretched; it

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would be a living grave for you, Harry! and I can't, I can't stay here!" she said in the same broken, plaintive tones.

"You will make me a thousand times more wretched; I shall have to go myself if you leave us, Maud! Don't fear me—I will not obtrude my love on you, if it makes you suffer! When I read that man's letter—"

"What man's?" she asked eagerly.

"That man Burwell's! I found it at the office when I returned this afternoon, and though I would rather have been shot or tortured on the rack than believed anything against you, I thought, if it were all true, how you must have suffered, Maud! Can you ever forgive me?"

"For heaven's sake, Harry, if you have any pity on me," she cried vehemently, "don't talk like that! Don't mention that word! I cannot hear it escape your lips, in my presence, without torturing me!"

"Oh, no, Maud! You must not feel like that! I never intended to say a word to you on the subject if you had not spoken to me first. I know too well what it is to need forgiveness, to be chary of it to others. I know you better than you know yourself, Maud. Please, stay with us; it may be a great sacrifice to ask of you, but I don't know what to do, what else to say. I trust you, I believe in you, and your promises are still more sacred to me than any-

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thing else in the world. Please, Maud, promise you will stay here!"

She shook her head languidly, sadly, and said:

"I cannot! I wish I could, Harry! But I have suffered enough in trying to deceive, and it will kill me to have the world think me your wife, and you to think me unworthy even of the name of mistress."

"Maud, don't! Don't say that, Maud!" he exclaimed, as if he were suddenly hurt. "You are more than worthy of me! My past is more soiled than yours; let us forget it all, cut it off from our existence. We have still got a future before us, a bright future, you could make it a golden future, Maud. I still love you as I did."

"Ah, but you cannot forget my past. You cannot forget all the wrongs I have committed, how I have degraded."

"Hush! Your wrongs are mine, your faults are mine, and you cannot degrade in my eyes, you are my wife, Maud! If a man cannot forgive a woman, if a man does not lift up a woman when she stumbles, he is unworthy the ground he is treading upon. Come, Maud, tell me you will stay!"

"And the world? And Burwell? And the baby?" she asked without looking at him.

"Thank God, the baby is dead! He might have been a hindrance to our future life! And, as for the world, Maud; you shall be my world, and our future shall make our life, not our past!"

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"You are so good, so generous! and I am so unworthy of all this—" she began.

But he drew her nearer to him, and folded her in his arms, and pressed her to his breast as if he were trying to assure her and himself that she was his, that they were once more united!

"They say that angels are always near when reconciliations are effected!" said St. John, releasing his wife from his embrace, when he heard Nina's tiny voice crying outside, "May I come in?"

"Yes, come in!" he said in answer to it, and Nina ran into the room and ran up to him and kissed him.

"Oh, papa! you have come home and don't let mamma cwy any mowe, will you? She has been cwying, oh, so much, papa!"

"Yes, little one!" he said, kissing her. "Mamma won't cry any more! You have been very good, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes, papa, vewy, vewy good! Look, what mamma gave me!" and she pointed to her string of pearls. St. John looked at it, glanced at Maud, and the latter blushed violently.

"Let her wear it, Harry! It must be hers!"

"Come, Nina, let's go downstairs in mamma's room!" he said, suddenly getting up. "I want you to do something for me!"

They all went down and walked to the boudoir and thence to the little ante-room. St. John took out a couple of letters from his pocket and handing it to

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the child, he said, "Now I'll strike a match and you'll burn it, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, papa, the same way I burned mamma's letters!"

"Have you read it?" asked Maud, turning to her husband, when she recognized the second letter to be in her own handwriting and which she concluded must have been the one to which Burwell referred.

"No, Maud, I have not! And I don't want to, dearest;" he added gently. "It was not addressed to me, ever, was it?" And they stood there, all in silence watching the papers burn in the fireplace. It blazed up, flickered, abated in flame, and soon died out. Nothing but dark ashes was left of it. Maud could only press the hand which was extended to her, in expression of her tumultuous feeling of gratitude, when Nina turned round and exclaimed in delight:

"It's finished! it's all finished!"

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EPILOGUE.

IN LONDON.

More than a year had already passed. It was in the midst of summer, and the night was warm, and soft, and the air was gentle, and the breeze was like the caress of nature. It was still all round; the trees stood as if in enchanted repose, as if in mysterious communion with the myriads of stars shining in liquid lustre above them. Nothing broke the silence save the loud and roaring din of tumultuous London, which came in undulating waves, approaching and receding as if swayed by some mighty and invisible power.

"You know I have often sat here for hours, this way, listening to that din, watching it approach nearer and nearer, as if threatening to inundate this very silence."

"That's the fascination of your sombre London; you've got everything within its ghastly greatness, villas within your prison walls, Sylvan shades within your market places; what have you not got in your mighty, massive and majestically monstrous London?"

It was Trench and Prescott, sitting out on the lawn of the former's residence in Kensington Square

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Gardens, with cigarettes in their hands, smoking and talking. From inside of the house came the ringingly mellow voices of the ladies, who were evidently engaged in an animated conversation, while the men had retired to the lawn after dinner to finish their cigarettes.

"I tell you what!" Trench broke in, "there is nothing like it; you've got nothing like this in your country. I don't know what it is, but the very air, even, of quiet Boston, is charged with a spirit of restlessness. I never felt at ease there."

"It was a case of conscience;" Prescott remarked, quietly drawing his cigarette.

"Fiddlesticks! I think I should have gone crazy if I had remained there."

"I admit it would not take much to accomplish such a thing," Prescott interposed slyly, but Trench did not take much notice of it. He went on, saying,

"Though I don't believe I suffered half so much over all the things that happened to me there, as I did when I came back and had the leisure to think it over. It was terrible; it seemed as if I had passed through some confounded whirlwind, where men women, children, and fiends were all mixed up!"

"You left out the angels; I was in it, my dear boy!"

"Well, you must have had your color changed for the time being; I did not recognize you in the disguise. There is one thing, though, I cannot for

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give you for, and that is your introducing me to Burwell."

"That fact lies heavier on my conscience than your resentment does on my senses. Gad! I'll never forget that experience to my dying days! I don't believe St. John has ever condoned my crime for introducing you to Mrs. St. John either; besides, I am guilty before the State, too; we have lost one citizen through that sorry business. Burwell is never to return!"

There was silence for a moment or two. Both of them seemed absorbed in their memories of the past which their conversation had conjured up. Then Trench broke in, as if speaking his thoughts aloud.

"It makes my flesh creep, when I think what might have happened!"

"I shiver at such contemplations myself; I might not have been born!"

"If you go on being funny, you are sure to make others shiver for it!"

"I don't care if *you* do! I have shivered enough for your sake. For weeks I have felt cold and hot streams running down the nape of my neck for fear that mother would discover all about it! She was perplexed and skeptical about my explanations of it to the very last. I am sorry mother did not live to see this—Mary's marriage to you! Damn me, if I invite another Englishman ever to stay with us again!"

"Poor fellow!" said Trench, "I do believe you

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haven't forgiven me yet for taking away your sister from you."

"I do believe I haven't;" replied Prescott in mocking annoyance. "Why in thunder didn't you run away with Mrs. St. John?"

"Just to plague you; not to give you the opportunities for making a dozen or so of epigrammatic remarks, that's all!"

"Well I suppose the man who tries to be good natured has got to bear all the buffs of fate with a smile on his face. Only I'll be deuced lonely without Mary

"I am awfully sorry, Willie! Why can't you come and live here, too? It would be a capital idea!"

"Eh? That's what all the men do, they are sorry after they get you hung. Hang me if I can't be more original in my mode of revenge than what you propose. Why can't you come to Boston?"

"Because, I've got all I want of Boston—I have your sister."

"Oh well, that's the only thing that'll make Mary's parting from me somewhat more bearable! I used to think all the world of her when I believed she had a better appreciation of Boston's mankind. I used to esteem her judgment as infallible."

"So it is, my dear fellow, I can assure you!" replied Trench warmly. "It was through her judgment that I was saved from the worst fate that could have happened to me."

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"I would have shown a little more gratitude than falling in love with her for it!" interrupted Prescott.

"Don't I show enough gratitude by being anxious to take her away from Boston and save her from you? It's strange, though, how a man can really love one woman dearly and think all the time that he loves another, isn't it?"

"Damn strange! I experienced it myself once or twice. I think, though, it's nothing but the natural outcome of our providential natures."

"How?"

"How? Most men ought to love two women at a time. We'd be prepared for the worse, then, and could never be in want of a substitute! That's business!"

"I know you make it your business to talk like a lunatic, though I am not surprised you feel so sore on the subject! 'Gad, I thought I would never believe in humanity again. I used to sit here and think womankind that vampire Burwell described to me once."

"So bad as that?"

"Yes, and worse!" continued Trench, not noticing Prescott's satirical interruption. "I doubted everybody and everything, after that Boston escapade of mine. It seemed, as if a hideous world had suddenly been revealed to me, and that, somehow, I had looked too close on life, and found virtue, and goodness and beauty mere delusions. I believed American women—"

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"Angels, and all that sort of thing? My dear fellow, I know it! I have not passed through any such experiences as you have, but I know what havoc events can work with the human heart and mind! It's your own fault! People are fools who blame others for whatever happens to them. We are all deuced egotists, and don't think ourselves either stupid enough or wicked enough to commit any follies, so we palm them off on others. Boston is all right, so was Jerusalem when it was inhabited by her chosen children. It's only idiots who judge mankind by the reflection of their personal experiences. One man does not make a nation, nor a city, nor a society, nor even a village! Burwell is not Boston's gentleman, and Mrs. St. John could be found in London if you searched for her. Good people, and bad people, heroes and numbskulls are everywhere under your very nose, if you look for them—"

"By my side, I see!" interrupted Trench, softly. "But there is one being, you see, I had to go to Boston for, and whom I could not find in London."

Prescott, thus interrupted, was silent for a second or two. He lit another cigarette and fell back on his seat, ready to say something, when suddenly he noticed the ladies approaching them.

"Here she is!" he said, as his sister, linking Miss Trench's arm, came nearer them.

"What have you been so engrossed in all this time?" asked Miss Trench. "Mary said you were

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fighting about Boston and Bostonians, and that you were sure to come to blows over it."

"We would if you had not come in time!" replied Trench. "Will you take that Pagan in the hand and teach him how to appreciate better the beauties of London?" he added, addressing himself to his sister. "He has dislocated his wits in arguing against it, and making epigrams against mankind. Will you accompany me, Mary, to the library, and I'll show you that book I spoke of?" and he offered her his arm. But before they walked off Prescott called out:

"Oh, Mary! Mary! Not that I have any hopes of him, but will you try and show him that there is only one Boston in the world, and that the world would be a very miserable place without it?"

"Yes, I'll try, Willie, if you'll tell me where you stopped?"

"I did not stop; I was interrupted!" replied Prescott. "I was telling him that we Bostonians believed that marriages are not made in heaven; that we had a good enough place to make them in, and that was Boston! I leave the rest to you; confident that you are still my sister."

"He will talk the stars out of the firmament, if we stop to listen to him," remarked Trench, as he led Mary toward the house.

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